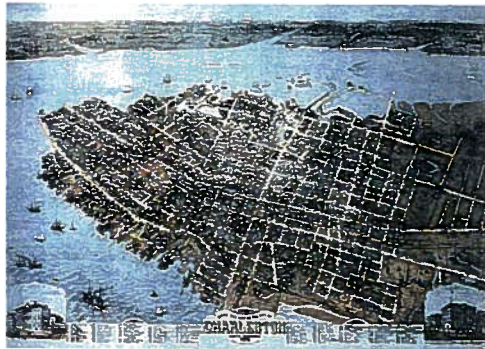


The Charleston Downtown Plan

Achieving balance through strategic growth

including:

**Real estate and
economic development**



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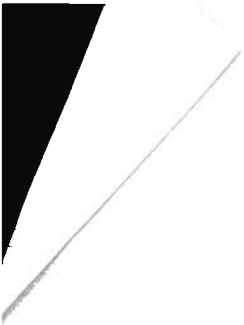


The Charleston Downtown Plan

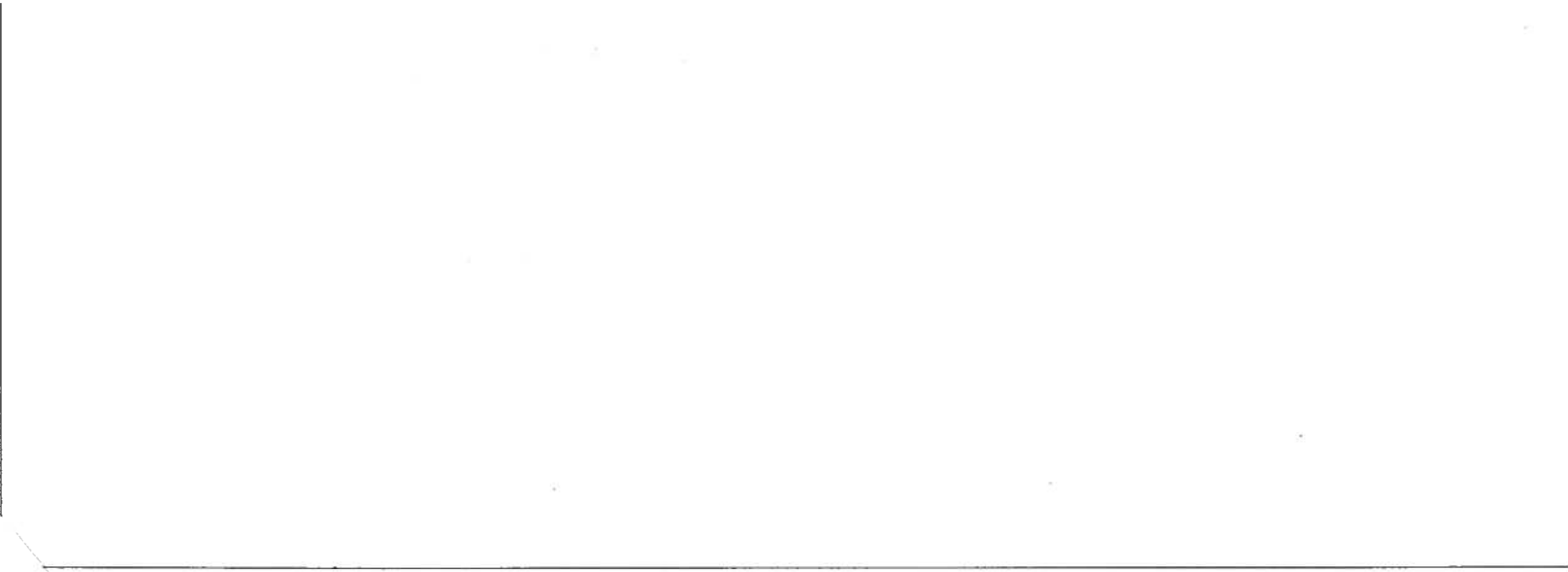
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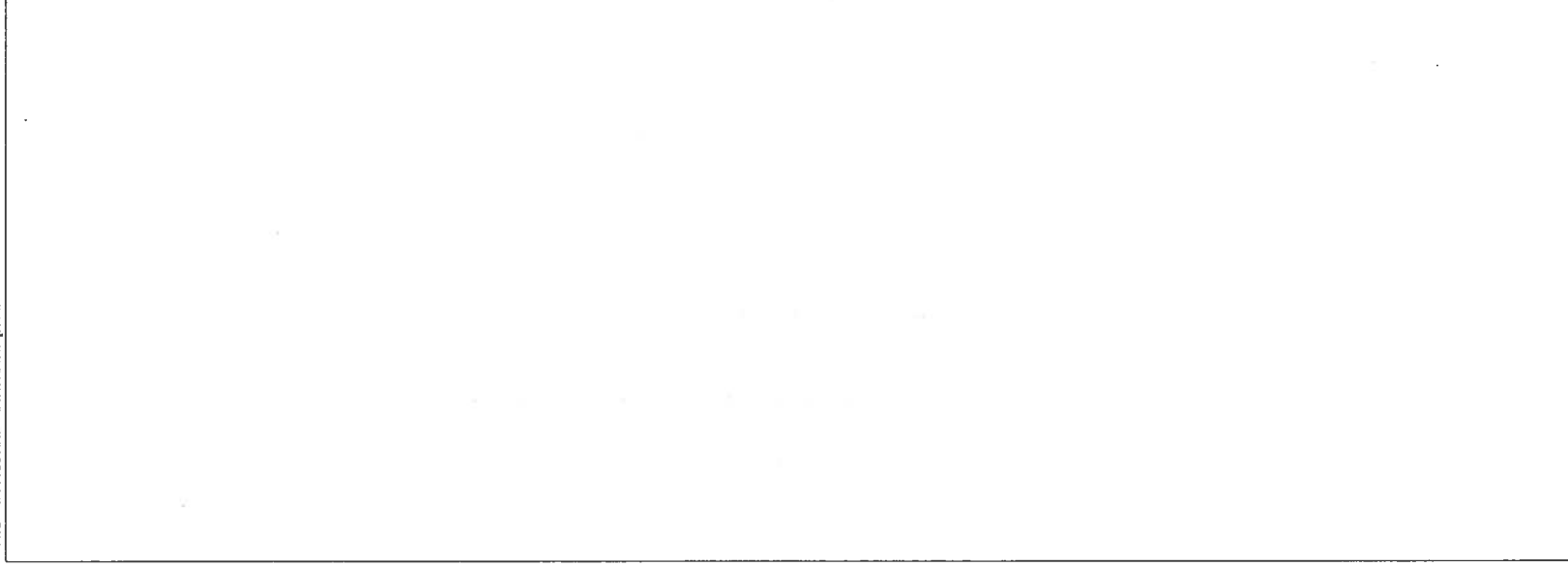


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The Charleston Downtown Plan

**Achieving balance
through strategic growth**

Adopted November 23, 1999

Urban Strategies Inc. • Development Strategies Inc. • SBF Design



URBAN STRATEGIES INC.

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Executive summary

Protecting and enhancing the quality of life was a key theme heard from local residents, retailers, developers, landowners, and institutions.



Approach:

Charleston is recognized as one of North America's most vibrant, livable cities. In recent years, the city has experienced an economic resurgence that has enhanced the prosperity of many downtown residents. Charleston's lower peninsula – the downtown – is now at a critical juncture. Success has also brought tensions and conflict, between residents, visitors, students and businesses. Creation of a Downtown Plan provides the opportunity to pause and reflect on future directions. The preservation of quality of life in the face of increasing pressures for growth is of paramount importance.

Charleston faces a challenging decision. On one hand, there is a strong sense by some citizens that there should be no further growth: there are already too many cars, too many people, too many visitors, too many students. On the other hand, many citizens believe that the quality of life could be improved by adding new jobs and by ensuring that housing is affordable for a wider range of incomes. Many people also believe that some parts of the lower peninsula could benefit from reinvestment. According to the former viewpoint, growth should be limited. According to the latter, there may be benefits from some growth. How can these viewpoints be reconciled?

In fact, this debate is not between preservation and growth. They can both occur. Charleston is now "on the map." Its uniqueness and quality of life ensure that it will continue to be in demand as a place to live, a place to work and a place to visit. Pressures for growth will continue. Growth is a positive attribute for any city that must continue to evolve in order to thrive economically, socially and culturally. **The key issue becomes one of managing the change and directing the growth for the betterment of downtown residents and businesses.**

Strategic growth management provides an opportunity to deflect growth pressure from where it causes the most friction to areas where it can bring the most benefits. The Downtown Plan provides guidance in that respect by identifying areas that can accommodate new development and those areas that should be protected. In some parts of downtown, particularly south of Calhoun Street, a smaller amount of development should be accommodated. North of Calhoun Street, there is room to accommodate a greater degree of growth that could be beneficial to all members of the downtown community.

The Downtown Plan recommends a balanced and coordinated strategy for the next twenty years. The key is to transcend the boundaries of individual issues and neighborhoods to deal with the downtown holistically. The

downtown's limited supply of available land is extremely precious – the citizens of Charleston must work together to ensure a positive future for the downtown and to preserve its quality of life. **The premise underpinning the Downtown Plan is that appropriately directed, new growth can enhance the social, economic and community amenities for existing and future residents.**

Principles:

The Downtown Plan is based upon nine principles:

- nurture inclusive, vibrant neighborhoods,
- pursue economic diversity,
- foster sustainability,
- reinforce the existing urban structure,
- respect the grain, scale and mix of the peninsula's urban fabric,
- ensure architectural integrity,
- encourage a balanced network for movement,
- use growth strategically,
- maintain downtown as the regional center of culture and commerce.



Charleston's urban fabric

The densest city fabric is found in the downtown's central area along the King and Meeting Street spine and in many of the neighborhoods. There is now an opportunity to reclaim the water's edge, much of which is occupied by waning industrial port uses, surface parking and less dense city fabric.

Accommodating Growth

Continued economic prosperity is essential to downtown's quality of life. As the metropolitan area continues to grow outside of the downtown area, the risk is that new development will be enticed to suburban locations to downtown's detriment. Prosperity is best maintained by ensuring that downtown remains the cultural, commercial, and residential heart of the region. Retaining this role requires that downtown continue to accommodate a full range of uses: housing, office, retail, cultural facilities, and accommodations. Where should this growth be accommodated?

Downtown has areas that can be characterized as stable, in transition, and redevelopable. These stable areas are mostly comprised of residential neighborhoods, places that should remain largely as they are in form and use. Little growth or change in use or form is anticipated or proposed in these areas.

The *transitional areas* are places where the city fabric still exists but has been eroded by surface parking lots and demolition. New development needs to be inserted onto the available parcels to reinforce their existing character. The transitional areas generally include the traditional retail and residential corridors in downtown: Upper King and Meeting Streets; Spring and Cannon Streets; Calhoun

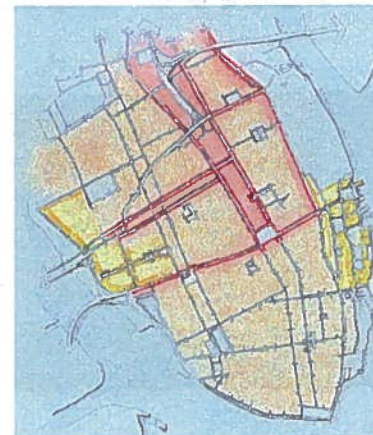
Street; Morrison Drive; and, the area occupied by the existing Cooper River Bridge.

The *redevelopment areas* are characterized by large tracts of vacant or underutilized land available for virtually total redevelopment. A network of streets and blocks and an appropriate built form needs to be established. Two major redevelopment areas exist: Cooper River waterfront including East Bay Street, and portions of the Ashley River waterfront including the area immediately north of the Crosstown along the Ashley River, and the medical complex.

With the exception of Union Pier, *transitional areas* and *redevelopment areas* are generally found north of Calhoun Street and are anticipated to absorb the majority of downtown growth.

Achieving Balance:

Charleston has completed an extraordinary body of work addressing specific issues that impact quality of life: tourism, students, cars and parking, housing, and visitor accommodation. An opportunity exists to work across the boundaries of previous studies, to address shared issues and develop common solutions.



Directing growth

There are ways to accommodate growth that will protect established neighborhoods while strengthening the lower peninsula's structure.

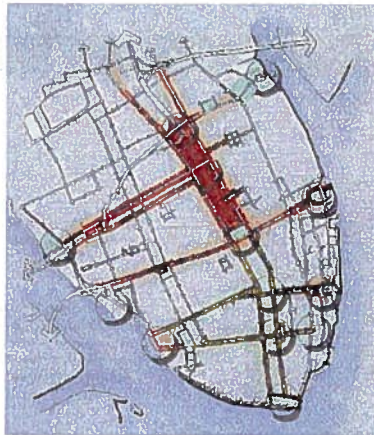
- Stable area
- Transition area
- Redevelopment area

As new housing, office, retail, and hotels are developed, five strategies should be pursued to ensure that *balance is maintained* and that growth contributes to downtown in a way that will improve the quality of life:

- improve neighborhood and community amenities,
- increase the affordability of housing in downtown,
- develop mechanisms to share growth's impact,
- reduce the reliance on cars.
- mitigate the financial impacts of growth.

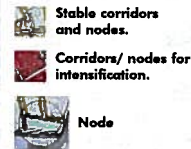
Urban Structure:

Growth needs to be further directed to strengthen Charleston's urban structure. Historically, growth occurred along the Cooper River waterfront, followed by King and Meeting Streets – the principal north-south parallel spines on higher ground. Wetlands were filled in to create wharves and other port-related activities. King and Meeting Streets were reinforced by the rail line and by a set of perpendicular spines: Spring and Broad Streets, and Calhoun and Market Streets. Relative inactivity in the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries left the historic city largely intact.



Existing and proposed nodes and corridors

The lower peninsula's urban structure will be preserved and enhanced.



The majority of downtown possesses characteristics that are universally sought after – a mix of uses, intimacy, pedestrian quality and a sense of place. Each of these qualities serve as a model of urbanism.

However, in the post WW II era, Charleston has experienced the same forces impacting many American cities: mainly competing suburban communities, and the popularity of the car and the necessity to accommodate it. In areas where the city fabric is less consistent, its integrity is challenged by building forms that are more suburban in form and therefore do not fit well within the urban context.

There are four strategies for molding new development to reinforce this desirable city structure:

- reinforce the key intersections and corridors
- create new activity areas on both riverfronts
- support the existing neighborhoods
- enhance the public realm.

Land Use:

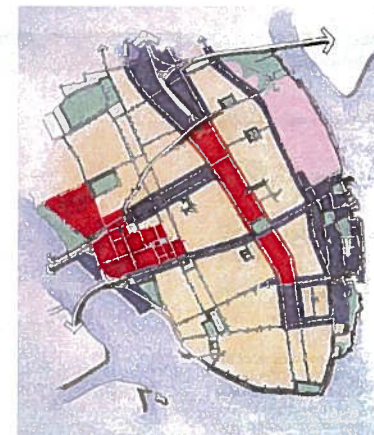
The land use strategy is intended to be highly transit-supportive by placing greater amounts of employment (work-

ers), tourism (visitors) and housing (residents) within proximity to existing and potential transit corridors. The future land use recommendations also reinforces the urban structure.

Little change is anticipated in the predominantly residential areas occupying the majority of downtown, designated low-intensity neighborhood. The corridors (*transitional areas*) and the *redevelopment areas* are designated medium- and high-intensity mixed-use and are expected to accommodate a broad range of land uses. Focal points indicate key locations where particular consideration to urban design or architectural elements is intended to create landmarks.

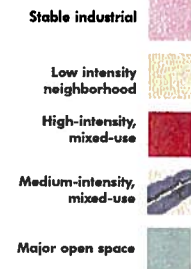
Built Form:

The city's character can be reinforced by ensuring the integrity of each new building. Buildings that fit into the historic city fabric have a number of specific characteristics. While there are exceptions, structures are relatively small in scale. Heights are relatively low. Active uses such as living, retail or office space are located at grade level or just above. Buildings have minimal setbacks. Parking is generally incorporated on street or in small driveways. In short, the city is comprised of buildings that occupy much of the lot, frame the streets and parks, and remain at a relatively consistent, low height. The effect is an intimate, pedestrian scale and unique environment.



Proposed land use

The distribution of uses largely does and will continue to relate directly to the lower peninsula's urban structure.



A number of issues have arisen that significantly impact the design and feel of new development. Recommendations aim to extend the character of the historic city into new development:

- new development should express the fine grain and small-scale of the city,
- design and construction strategies should focus on preserving vitality at-grade where possible, while respecting FEMA flood plain regulations that generally prohibit active uses from being located at street level,
- on-site parking requirements should be reduced to encourage active uses at grade,
- density restrictions on residential buildings should be reduced along transit corridors in order to allow for the type of density appropriate for downtown development,
- the excellent heritage preservation efforts in downtown should be extended to apply to the lands north of Line Street which will soon be under pressure to develop.

Implementation:

The implementation strategy ensures that downtown's evolution embodies the Plan's principles and achieves its physical, economic and social objectives.





A vision for the lower peninsula

- Transition areas 
- Redevelopment areas 
- Stable corridors 
- Stable neighborhoods 

The historic spine of the peninsula, the Upper King/ Meeting corridor will be strengthened with improved transit and infill development.

Cross peninsula trails will connect to Riverwalks.

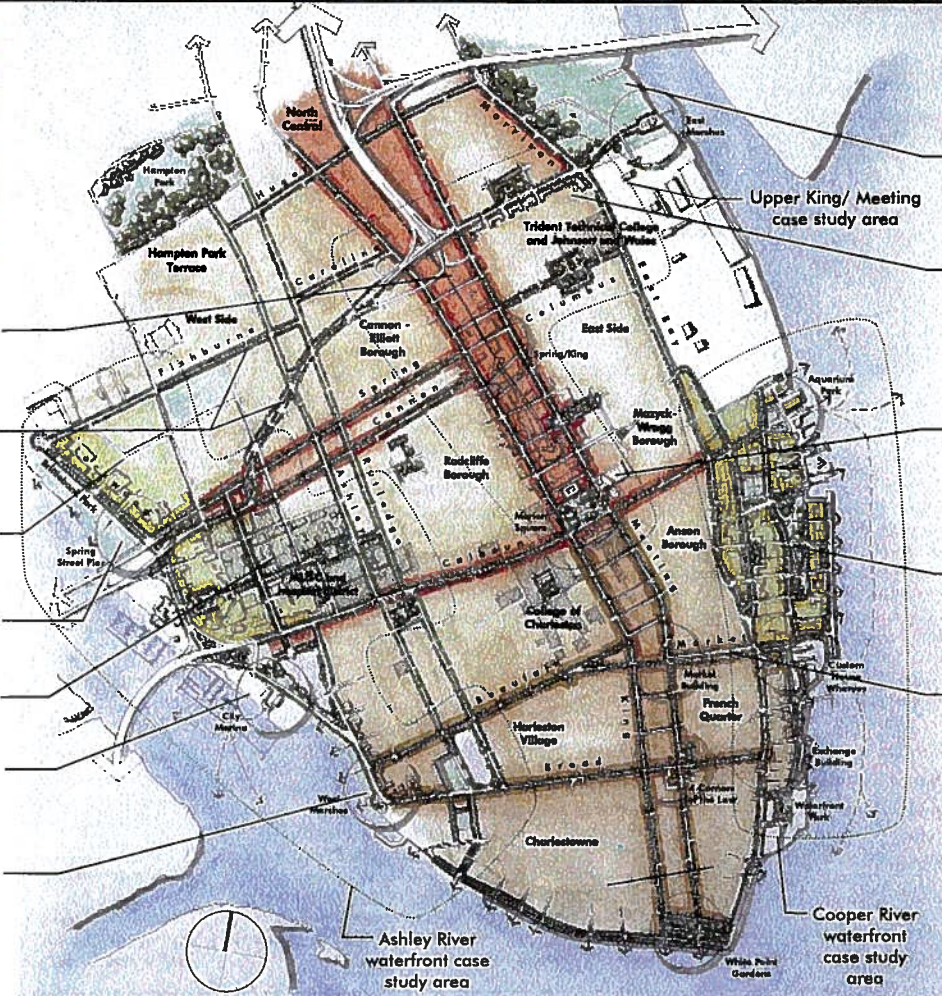
Upper Lockwood will contain new employment uses such as corporate headquarters and high tech research and development.

Brittlebank Park will be extended south.

MUSC plans to expand its facilities.

Public access to the Ashley River will be improved.

Lower Lockwood contains infill housing opportunities as well as the chance to considerably enhance the public space at the water's edge.



Upper King/ Meeting case study area

The Marshes could become an ecological park or fishing pier.

The removal of the Cooper River Bridge will create the opportunity to knit the East Side neighborhood together with new housing.

The Federal Building site, one of the most prominent on the peninsula, could accommodate a major new public use and housing.

Upper Concord neighborhood and Union Pier will mostly contain new housing and office employment opportunities with significant new open spaces.

Diverse, resident-oriented growth is encouraged on Market Street.

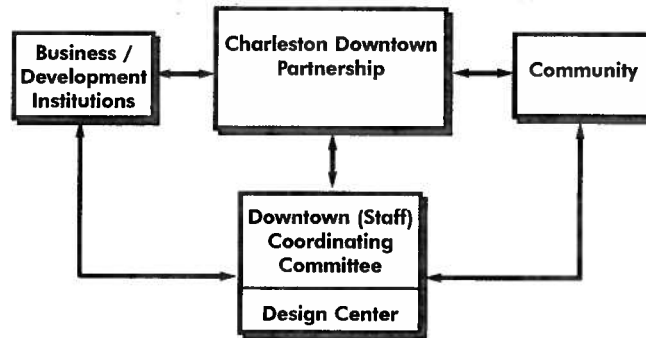
Corridors below Calhoun Street will remain stable.

Growth will be directed away from the city's neighborhoods.

Ashley River waterfront case study area

Cooper River waterfront case study area

Proposed organizational structure



The Charleston Downtown Partnership would include representatives from resident and business interests who would work with senior city staff and the newly created design center to implement key downtown initiatives.

The implementation strategy is grounded in Charleston's strong culture of collaboration and consensus building, bringing key sectors of the community together to work to downtown's benefit. The essential elements of the strategy are:

- consensus around the vision: by the community, including city government, residents, developers, landowners, retailers and institutions,
- an effective organizational structure: The Downtown Plan has stressed a comprehensive, collaborative approach to managing the lower peninsula's future. Three opportunities are proposed to link interests and issues together:
 - a Charleston Downtown Partnership to ensure collaboration between the city, the private sector and the community,
 - a Design Center, as currently being contemplated by the city, to assist the community in developing and implementing an urban design vision,
 - a Downtown (Staff) Co-ordinating Committee to formulate strategy, design initiatives and review proposals,
- a program of tasks including special area plans, design review of specific development proposals, review of capital spending priorities, and community outreach programs, preparation of a housing master plan, and, a cultural facilities master plan,
- pursuit of additional funding opportunities from other levels of government and private foundations,
- continued community outreach through education, participation in downtown partnership and working committees.

These fundamental elements can be readily put into place, ensuring that the process of managing the peninsula's evolution for the betterment of its residents and business people begins today.



Introduction and overview

1. The Charleston downtown plan

1. Introduction

Charleston is recognized as one of North America's most vibrant, livable cities. The agreeable climate, historic buildings, the exceptional gardens and public spaces, combined with its warm hospitality and cultural activities create an unparalleled setting for residents and visitors. In recent years, the city has had an economic resurgence that has enhanced the prosperity of many downtown residents.

However, success has also brought tensions and conflict between competing interests - residents, visitors, students and businesses. At the leading edge of city management, Charleston has established many successful initiatives to deal with tourism, student, and parking issues. However, as the activities of downtown's many inhabitants and visitors increasingly overlap, there is the perception that the quality of life and the experience of downtown is potentially compromised.

Success has brought tensions as more and more people and cars compete for the restricted amount of space, particularly that below Calhoun Street.



The study focuses on the downtown or lower peninsula, the area below Fishburne Street and the Crosstown Expressway. However, the entire peninsula and city region was considered in assessing conditions and developing recommendations.

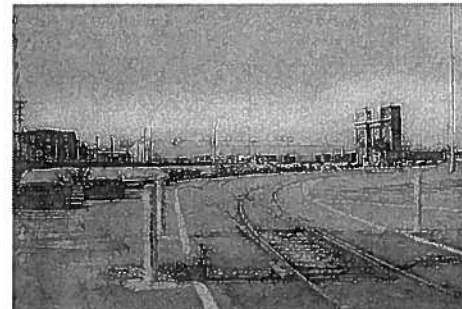
The Downtown Plan is built upon an understanding that the lower peninsula comprises three distinct types of areas:



stable,



in transition and...



redevelopment areas.

The lower peninsula – the downtown – is now at a critical juncture. Creation of a downtown plan provides opportunity for citizens of Charleston to pause and reflect on future directions for this central portion of the city. *The preservation of quality of life in the face of increasing pressures for growth is of paramount importance in this deliberation.*

In fact, the debate is not between preservation and growth. They can both occur. Charleston is now “on the map.” Its uniqueness and quality of life ensure that it will continue to be in demand as a place to live, a place to work and a place to visit. Growth pressures will continue, a positive attribute for any city to thrive economically, socially and culturally. The key issue becomes one of *managing* the demand and directing the growth.

Strategic growth management provides an opportunity to deflect growth pressure from where it causes the most friction to areas where it can bring the most benefits. The Downtown Plan provides guidance by identifying areas that can accommodate new development and those areas that should be protected. **By directing growth, the Plan seeks to reinforce downtown’s primacy as a cultural, economic, and administrative center, to foster a viable, healthy city fabric throughout the downtown, and to strengthen the vitality of downtown neighborhoods.**

The Downtown Plan recommends a balanced and coordinated strategy over the next twenty years. The key is in a collaborative approach that transcends the boundaries of individual issues and neighborhoods to address the downtown holistically. The downtown’s limited supply of available land is extremely precious. Charlestonians must work together to ensure a positive future for the downtown and to preserve its quality of life.

Approach

The Downtown Plan establishes parameters to guide future development, anticipating both private sector investment and public investment in infrastructure. The plan does not make rigid recommendations for specific uses and buildings. Rather than being a regulatory document, it aims to provide an interpretative framework within which individual decisions can be made, allowing for flexibility and creativity. Similarly, the plans and drawings show intent and overall objectives rather than hard and fast requirements.

The Plan sets out a vision rooted in an understanding of the historic role played by the downtown in the economic, cultural and social life of the region and of the opportunities to strengthen that role. Key to the vision is an under-

standing of the existing physical fabric of the city, and in particular, those elements that have successfully defined Charleston.

The lower peninsula comprises three distinct types of areas: areas that are physically intact and relatively stable, such as the residential neighborhoods that are not suitable for major change; areas that are in *transition* with some opportunities for infill and redevelopment, such as the Spring/Cannon or Calhoun corridors; and *major redevelopment* areas where significant opportunities exist to accommodate new growth, the Cooper River waterfront being the largest of these areas. This characterization underpins the vision for the future.

The Downtown Plan is a living, flexible document that can be readily operationalized and used as a basis for targeting initiatives and responding to proposals. Its implementation builds upon existing city resources, involving the collaborative efforts of all sectors of the community and the creation of new forums. It addresses holistically the economic, social, and physical opportunities and challenges that present themselves in Charleston’s downtown core.

The Downtown Plan focuses on the area of the peninsula south of the Septima Clark Expressway, the Crosstown and Fishburne Street. This area was selected because of its

Waterfront Park is a nationally acclaimed city initiative that builds upon and extends Charleston's Battery walk. It gives local and regional residents new access to the water. New housing and institutional development will soon complement it's western edge.

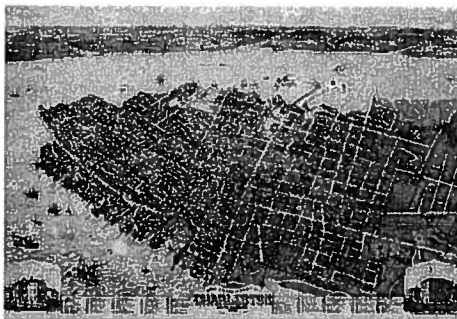


more urban character. However, the issues and opportunities extend well beyond the Crosstown. When neighborhoods, commercial activities and institutions lie in such close proximity, their existences are very much intertwined.

Ultimately the Downtown Plan will form part of the update to *Charleston 2000*, the city's Comprehensive Plan, due to be completed in 1999. It is informed by the wealth of excellent work undertaken by the City of Charleston over the last decade, including the 1989 *Calhoun Street Corridor Study*, 1994 *Tourism Management Plan* and the 1998 *Update*, 1995 *Town and Gown Technical Report*, the 1995 *CHATS (Charleston Area Transportation Study) Long Range Public Transportation Plan*, and the 1995 *Charleston Bikeway and Pedestrian Plan*, the 1998 *Spring and Cannon Corridor Plan*, and the 1998 *Visitor Accommodation Study*. It also provides input into the ongoing *Downtown Parking and Traffic Study* that is due to be completed in late 1999 which will update the 1982 *Traffic and Parking Study*. Strategies and policies from these plans are still in place except where the downtown plan proposes an alternate approach.

The Downtown Plan is divided into four sections:

The Vision describes a goal for downtown Charleston that builds on its historic armature and sets out the principles that underpin it.



Managing Growth and Achieving Balance outlines the kind of growth that should be accommodated. It also draws out common themes and solutions from the many excellent existing initiatives that aim to achieve balance between competing demands as growth occurs.



The demands of Twentieth Century transportation are accommodated in this parking structure facing historic Marion Square. Its retail design reinforces the character of King Street while its location reinforces the street's role as a major transportation corridor.

Directing Growth to Reinforce the City's Character analyzes the urban structure and opportunities to preserve and reinforce it, while strategically directing growth to key portions of the lower peninsula. It also examines challenges to be faced in ensuring the architectural integrity of future development. Case studies provide an in-depth analysis of areas where change is anticipated, based on the principles underpinning the plan's vision.

Next Steps outlines the broad strategies for implementing the Downtown Plan. The goal is to put in place an appropriate operational structure to implement a comprehensive approach to managing community development issues.

Next Steps outlines the broad strategies for implementing the Downtown Plan. The goal is to put in place an appropriate operational structure to implement a comprehensive approach to managing community development issues.

Sponsored by the City of Charleston Department of Planning and Urban Development, the Downtown Plan was produced by a multi-disciplinary team that included key members of the client group. The team was led by Urban Strategies Inc. (USI), urban designers and planners. Development Strategies Inc. (DSI) was responsible for the economic and market analysis, the findings of which are incorporated into Part I and contained in their entirety in Part 2. SBF Design of Charleston provided architectural expertise and invaluable local insight.

The team also included representatives from the City of Charleston Department of Planning and Urban

Development as well as an Advisory Committee that included local residents, retailers, developers, landowners, and institutions to insure that individual voices and interests were heard. Both the City representatives and the Advisory Committee provided important input and feedback throughout the study process.

The Plan was initiated by meeting with every neighborhood and several business organizations to hear concerns and ideas for Downtown Charleston's future. Further opportunities to learn about the plan and offer ideas were provided at the Farmers' Market and through Open Houses held at the County Library. Children, our future leaders, were given special introductions to the plan and their voices heard through the Summer Recreation Program. In total, approximately 1,500 people attended meetings to voice their ideas and hopes for their community.

2. The principles

Management of new development should aim to balance economic growth and diversity with quality of life within the downtown.

Quality of life is a priority.

Working with the advisory committee, the community and the client group, consensus emerged that the lower peninsula's continued evolution should be guided by the following nine principles:

Nurture inclusive, vibrant neighborhoods

Charleston's neighborhoods – unique, charming, and intimate – are the cornerstones of downtown's success as a place to live and visit. However, quality of life is increasingly challenged by the burgeoning tourist industry, the rapid growth of educational institutions, and rapid increases in housing prices, among other things. Above Calhoun Street, neighborhoods are facing displacement. Quality of life is a priority: neighborhoods must be preserved, nurtured and inclusive. A greater diversity of accommodation is required to retain existing residents and attract new individuals and families from a range of income levels, ages, and cultural backgrounds.

Pursue economic diversity

Charleston's economy rebounded strongly after the 1996 closure of the Navy Base. The lower peninsula economy now relies heavily upon the service industry and tourism. Greater economic diversity should be pursued to provide residents with wider employment opportunities and to

attract new residents to the downtown. In addition, greater diversity will assist the economy in adapting to market cycles and remaining strong.

Maintain downtown as the regional center of culture and commerce

As Charleston emerges in the next millennium, it should pursue new economic opportunities – headquarter offices, high-technology industries and cultural activities – to solidify its position as the regional focus of culture and commerce. Retaining its central position within the region is a key element in ensuring that downtown remains a viable community where people can live, work, and enjoy a diversity of leisure opportunities.

Foster sustainability

Growth – tourism and institutional – brought economic riches to the peninsula and sponsored new community and cultural resources. However, growth has consequences. The lower peninsula needs to be thought of in the context of sustainability; management of new development should aim to balance economic growth and diversity with quality of life within the downtown.

Reinforce the existing urban structure

The lower peninsula was defined historically by a central north-south spine – King and Meeting Streets – and several secondary retail corridors. These corridors form a framework that supports downtown's low-rise residential neighborhoods. Although weakened in places through demolition and neglect, this armature is a valid underlying structure. Growth should be directed to vacant lands along the retail corridors in order to strengthen them. An opportunity exists to weave the lands above the waterfront into the downtown structure.

Respect the grain, scale and mix of the peninsula

Downtown Charleston is distinguished by a fine grain of streets, buildings and spaces. The structures, civic spaces, lanes, gardens and the mix of uses are finely woven together into an intricate and appealing whole. The grain is one of downtown's defining characteristics and should be preserved. In the next wave of development, there may be strong pressure to accommodate larger scale construction – commercial, residential, institutional, and tourism related – to respond to emerging corporate needs and economies of scale. To the greatest extent possible, new development should be disciplined and broken down into a pattern of

streets, blocks, buildings and open spaces that achieves a grain that complements the existing city.

Ensure architectural integrity

Much of downtown's atmosphere and appeal derives from a stock of sophisticated and urbane historic structures – residential, commercial, institutional and industrial – that frame and define an intimate and inviting pedestrian environment. Without superficially mimicking this building stock, its urban character still has much to teach us. Extending this quality and character into newly emerging areas is challenging. Increased dependence upon the car, combined with FEMA flood plain regulations, invites the use of the grade level for parking. Flood plain requirements also prohibit active uses at street level in some areas. The zoning ordinance makes it difficult to build dense, urban structures that are compatible with the historic downtown. These and other related issues need to be addressed to ensure integrity in new architecture comparable to that achieved historically.

Encourage a balanced network for movement

Since WWII, a world-wide trend has seen cars take priority over all other forms of transportation. The lower peninsula is now grappling with the legacy of this trend: how to move

the cars that congest the downtown and where to park them. The issue is all the more acute in the most historic areas where narrow, intimate streets are particularly stressed. With new investment planned on the peninsula, a booming economy that will likely attract further investment, and a growing number of visitors, Charleston needs to offset these pressures and find solutions that are based on a range of alternative forms of transportation: public transit, walking, bicycling, water-borne transit, and cars.

Use growth strategically

Growth should be directed to the areas where it will do the most good. Economic prosperity has made a relatively recent return to the lower peninsula, bringing with it new responsibilities and opportunities for all parties. As one of the hottest residential markets in the United States and one of the most desirable visitor destinations, downtown Charleston is well-positioned to have high expectations for what will or should be developed. It should be considered a privilege to develop in downtown Charleston, one that comes with a responsibility to give back to the community and to ensure the highest quality development in terms of design, materials and response to context.

3. The vision



Broad Street is a stable commercial and residential corridor. The Exchange building is the focal point which marks the street's eastern end.

Like heritage cities around the world, downtown Charleston must continue to evolve and change. In the future, downtown Charleston is envisioned as a highly livable community, home to a diverse population, offering a range of employment and leisure opportunities. New uses will be selectively targeted to benefit the downtown.

To preserve the vibrant quality of life, the Downtown Plan recommends building intelligently on the historic armature - strengthening the historic spine of the King and Meeting Corridor and approaching the waterfront in key areas without infringing upon neighborhoods. The strategy is three-pronged: infill development in the neighborhoods, repair and redevelop the transition areas weakened through demolition or neglect, redevelop newly available lands.

Vitality at grade level will be preserved in the newly emerging areas by extending the qualities and character that distinguish the historic city and by creatively implementing the FEMA flood plain guidelines. Balance in the community will be achieved by developing strategies that work across the boundaries of previous studies to address housing affordability, enhanced community amenities, mitigation of the financial impacts of growth, and enhanced public transit.

The vision for the physical form of the lower peninsula will support:

Corridors and nodes: Gaps along the corridors will be redeveloped with low- to mid-rise, dense structures and supported by transit. Retail corridors will be reinforced as downtown's shopping streets.

The King and Meeting Corridor will retain its role as downtown's main shopping street and will accommodate new retail, housing, office and accommodations. The Calhoun Corridor will be intensified from the Ashley River to the Cooper River. Spring and Cannon Streets, more densely developed, will retain their respective commercial and residential roles.

West of King Street, Broad Street is envisioned as primarily residential. Reuse of existing structures east of King Street will create the opportunity for shops and businesses, such as art galleries, coffee shops and small offices, which are compatible with adjacent housing.

Nodes of higher intensity public activity are envisioned where the east-west corridors meet King and Meeting

The corridors, or spines, of the peninsula are reinforced



Gaps along the corridors will be redeveloped with low- to mid-rise, dense structures and supported by transit. Retail corridors will be confirmed as downtown's shopping streets.

Streets and the Cooper and Ashley River waterfronts. These nodes, or focal points, which might include public art, well-defined civic spaces, parks and squares framed by buildings, will create points of interest throughout the downtown.

A vision for the lower peninsula

- Transition areas 
- Redevelopment areas 
- Stable corridors 
- Stable neighborhoods 

The historic spine of the peninsula, the Upper King/ Meeting corridor will be strengthened with improved transit and infill development.

Cross peninsula trails will connect to Riverwalks.

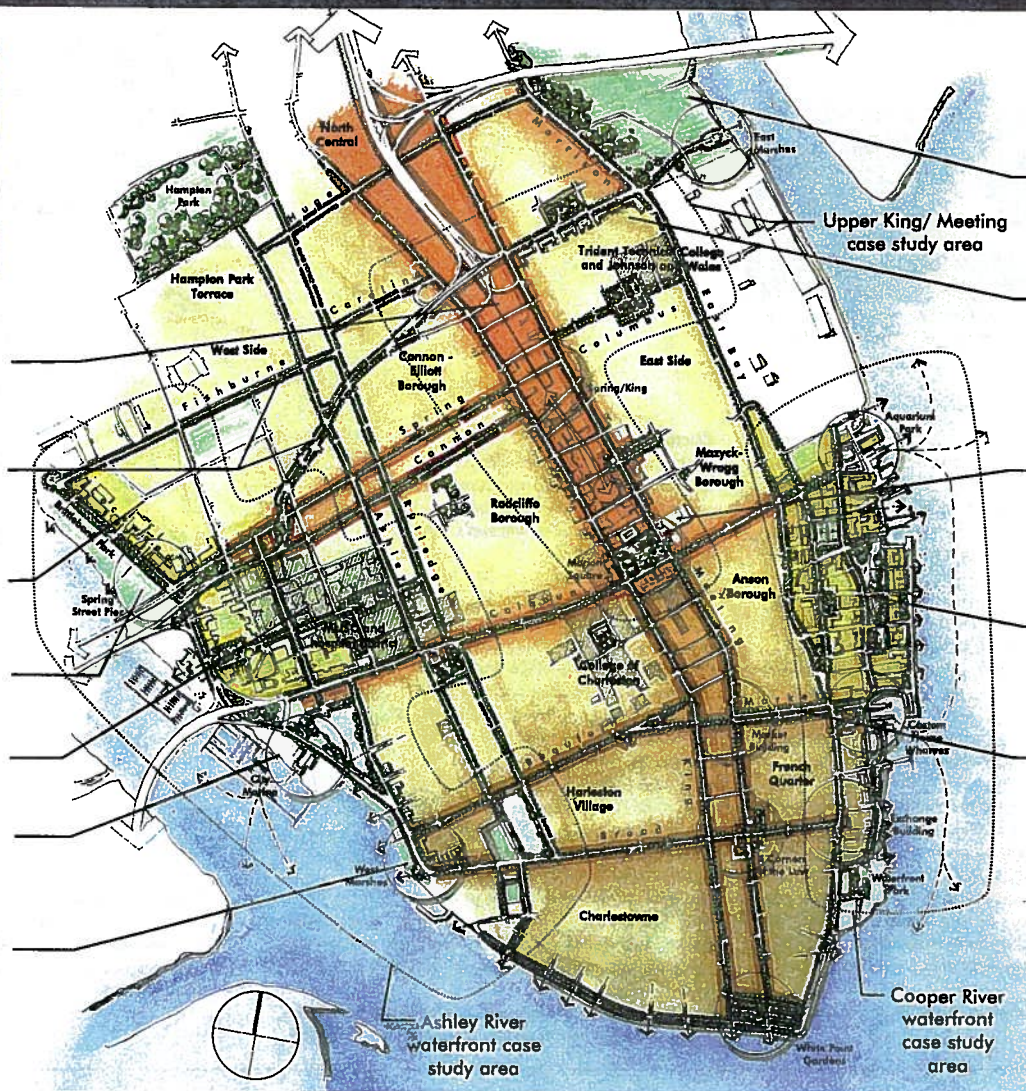
Upper Lockwood will contain new employment uses such as corporate head quarters and high tech research and development.

Brittlebank Park will be extended south.

MUSC plans to expand its facilities.

Public access to the Ashley River will be improved.

Lower Lockwood contains infill housing opportunities as well as the chance to considerably enhance the public space at the water's edge.



The Marshes could become an ecological park or fishing pier.

The removal of the Cooper River Bridge will create the opportunity to knit the East Side neighborhood together with new housing.

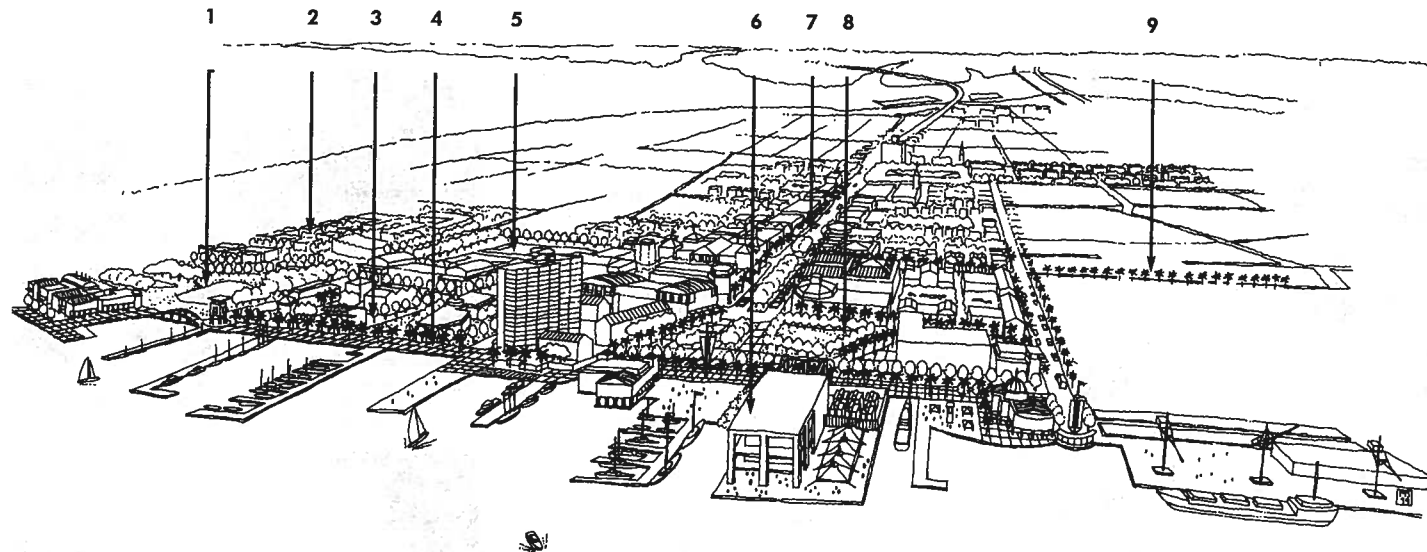
The Federal Building site, one of the most prominent on the peninsula, could accommodate a major new public use and housing.

Upper Concord neighborhood and Union Pier will mostly contain new housing and office employment opportunities with significant new open spaces.

Diverse, resident-oriented growth is encouraged on Market Street.

Corridors below Calhoun Street will remain stable.

Growth will be directed away from all of the city's neighborhoods.



The eastern end of the Calhoun corridor is emerging as an important new public place, accommodating the new Aquarium park. The extension of the Riverwalk along the water's edge completes the ensemble of amenities and infrastructure. The Upper Concord neighborhood grows around the twin foci of Concord Park and the playing fields. All of the new development is low scale, in keeping with the existing city fabric.

1. Concord Park in Union Pier
2. Upper Concord neighborhood
3. Maritime Center
4. Riverwalk
5. Playing fields
6. Aquarium
7. Calhoun corridor
8. Aquarium lawn
9. Trail extension north

The Calhoun Street Corridor, Aquarium Park and Riverwalk



The peninsula's neighborhoods, such as Charlestowne (above in 1982 aerial), will be protected from the negative impacts of growth.

Residential neighborhoods: Downtown is envisioned as a place for families, singles and elderly to live. One of the answers to the rising housing costs is to increase supply. Housing in all income ranges will be created by building compatible housing on vacant and underutilized sites throughout the neighborhoods.

Moderately priced housing will be created in dense, mixed-use projects along the downtown corridors: King and Meeting Streets, Cannon Street and Calhoun Street are all appropriate areas. Singles, young couples, the elderly, and lower-income earners will find attractive housing and a range of unit sizes in three- to four-story apartments. Retail uses at grade will animate the streets and allow many day-to-day needs to be met within walking distance.

Affordable housing is envisioned as part of each new development, preventing its concentration in any one area and ensuring a diverse population throughout the down-

town. Assisted by a number of creative programs, the African-American community is envisioned as having a higher rate of home ownership, a key component in addressing displacement.

Employment opportunities: Opportunities for new employment are envisioned throughout the lower peninsula to diversify the job opportunities and help to attract young professionals and families. Expansion of the MUSC and new office development along the Cooper River are envisioned as two key foci. High-tech spin-off facilities will have the opportunity to locate where they can benefit from the MUSC expansion. Small offices in the historic city will provide opportunities for executives and independent entrepreneurs. Greater diversity will make the local economy less susceptible to economic cycles.

Transit: A greater reliance upon public transit, cycling and walking will reduce the impact of cars on the downtown.



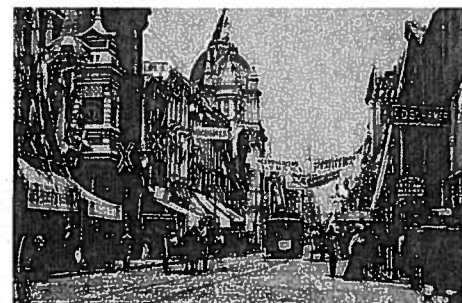
Upper Meeting Street looking south

More residents, commuters, and visitors will use alternative modes of transportation, reducing demand for parking on downtown streets. Shared parking structures will free up grade level for animated uses, ensuring street level vitality. A water taxi will transport residents and visitors between downtown, West Ashley, Mount Pleasant and Daniel Island, bringing greater activity to the waterfront. Visitors will be dispersed throughout the lower peninsula spreading their economic regenerative effect.

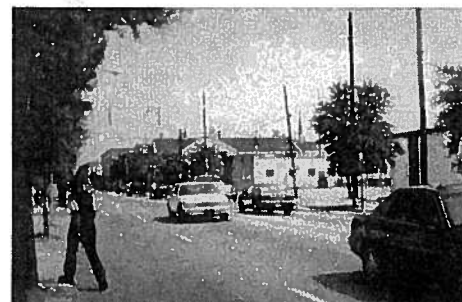
Quality architecture: In the future, Charlestonians will continue to demand high quality architecture throughout

the lower peninsula. While not strictly historic in style, new development will be architecturally compatible. The fine grain of the historic city – its scale, mix of uses, pattern of streets and blocks, intimate courtyards and gardens – will be reflected in new development, extending downtown's unique atmosphere northward. In addition, the commitment to maintaining modest heights will be continued.

Parks: Parks and open spaces will be woven throughout downtown, creating neighborhood hubs and opportunities for social activity. Some existing parks will be improved, such as DeReef Park and portions of Hampstead Square.



Transit, such as the trolley pictured, was a key ingredient in the creation of King Street as an important retail spine. Improved transit will help it remain so today.



There are many opportunities on Upper Meeting Street for infill development and an enhanced public realm.

New parks will be at the east end of the Calhoun Corridor and in the Union Pier development. The Waterfront Park will continue to serve as a standard of design excellence for new open spaces throughout the lower peninsula.

The waterfront: The waterfront will be an integral part of the city fabric, becoming more visible and accessible as the waterfront trail encircles downtown, forming a loop as it follows the path of the Crosstown.



Upper Lockwood Boulevard and Brittlebank Park looking south

Lockwood Boulevard will be the new western face of the peninsula. Office and high-tech research uses, among other uses, will be accommodated in urban buildings overlooking an enlarged Brittlebank Park.

The Ashley and Cooper riverfronts are envisioned as two different kinds of exciting waterfront destinations. The Cooper River waterfront will be brought to life by the new activities at the end of the Calhoun Corridor including the Union Pier development, containing cultural attractions and mixed-use neighborhoods that offer housing, offices, two playing fields and two waterfront parks. The hard edge to this deep river will provide an excellent vantage point for viewing ocean liners, sea birds and marine life.

The marshes of the smaller and shallower Ashley River will be traversed by boardwalks and observation points, run-

ning north above the Ashley River Bridge and meeting up with Brittlebank Park.

Partnerships: Through collaboration and partnerships – between the downtown community, the city, the visitor industry, institutions and developers – balance will be maintained and the community will be improved.

This is a vision of a prosperous, inclusive and livable downtown Charleston. The lower peninsula will be, first and foremost, a place to live, a neighborhood, a community. It will offer diverse employment opportunities, high quality

architecture and open spaces. With renewed commitment to public transit, the use of cars will be diminished, helping to retain downtown's high quality of life. Visitors will be welcomed from around the world. Partnerships and collaboration will restore balance.

Managing growth and achieving balance

The Charleston downtown plan

4. Why manage growth?

Growth is encouraged in corridors above Calhoun Street and on industrial lands. Strategically directed growth will stimulate investment, restoration and employment opportunities in these areas, while relieving pressure for development in the stable areas below Calhoun Street.



Meeting Street, above Calhoun Street, needs reinvestment.



Congestion at Meeting and Market Streets needs to be relieved.

The premise underpinning the downtown plan is that carefully directed and managed growth will improve the downtown's quality of life by diversifying the range of amenities it has to offer, strengthening its resident base and expanding employment opportunities.

4.1 Introduction

Charleston faces a series of challenging decisions. On one hand, there is a keen sense by some that there should be no further growth: there are already too many cars, too many people, too many visitors, too many students. On the other hand, many believe that the quality of life could be improved by adding new jobs and ensuring that housing is affordable for a wider range of incomes. Moreover, many believe that some parts of the lower peninsula could benefit from reinvestment. According to the former viewpoint, growth should be limited. According to the latter, there may be benefits from some growth. How can these viewpoints be reconciled?

In fact both are valid. In some parts of downtown, namely south of Calhoun Street, limited growth should be accommodated. North of Calhoun Street, there is room to accommodate growth that could be beneficial to all members of the downtown community. *The premise underpinning the downtown plan is that carefully directed and managed growth will improve the downtown's quality of life by diversifying the range of amenities it has to offer, strengthening its resident base and expanding employment opportunities.*

Strategically managing and directing growth will ensure that Charleston's current attributes will sustain future economic cycles and be preserved for generations to come.

The key to the downtown plan's success is in embracing growth: the right kind, the right mix and in the right locations. New development should be identified, targeted, and directed to locations where balance can be maintained and synergies maximized. The market analysis prepared by Development Strategies, which is the foundation for this Downtown Plan, finds development potential in each of the economic sectors. The question is: What new uses would most benefit downtown Charleston?

4.2 What new uses does Charleston want to accommodate?

Continued economic prosperity is essential to downtown's quality of life. As the metropolitan area continues to grow outside of the downtown area, the risk is that new development will be enticed to suburban locations to downtown's detriment. Prosperity is best maintained by ensuring that downtown remains the cultural, commercial and residential heart of the region. Retaining this role requires that downtown continue to accommodate a full range of uses: housing, office, retail, cultural facilities and accommodations. How can adding each of these uses enhance the downtown quality of life?

Housing: Additional housing will allow downtown Charleston to more vigorously recoup the population lost since the 1960s, improve the tax base and potentially reduce the number of people commuting daily into downtown. It also provides the opportunity to create more moderately priced housing to help retain a balanced community, both economically and demographically.

A review of demographic trends indicates that for more than thirty years, the peninsula experienced a significant drop in population. Between 1960 and 1990, the down-



Affordable housing needs to be a priority.

town population declined by about half to approximately 23,000, the number of households declined from 13,345 to 8,965 and the number of married couples with children declined from 3,955 to 918.

The peninsula's population shows significant polarization. It contains some of the wealthiest and poorest neighborhoods in the region.

In 1990, 35% of downtown households had income lower than the federally designated poverty level. Those households were concentrated in significant portions of Cannonborough - Elliottborough, the East Side, Radcliffeborough, the West Side and Wraggborough.

Several of these tracts also contain some of the highest concentrations of African Americans in the city. However, downtown is gradually losing its ethnic diversity. The African-American population has decreased by about 4,000 - 6,000 residents each census decade since 1960. Whereas previously, the majority of area residents were African-American, today there are almost as many Caucasians as African-Americans in the study area.

At the same time, there has been renewed interest in residential real estate on the lower peninsula and in fact city statistics indicate a recapture of approximately 300 people

since the 1990 Census. This is due in part to an increasing number of students at College of Charleston, but also due to the city's growing attractiveness as a place to live. Many households with personal wealth have been drawn to Charleston for the amenities and lifestyle. Often these are retired persons. Others use a home in historic Charleston as a seasonal or vacation residence.

This phenomenon has led to dramatically rising property values, largely in the oldest and best preserved sections of the lower peninsula, but increasingly throughout the peninsula. The median value of homes sold in downtown south of the Crosstown Expressway increased by 67 percent between 1990 and 1998, by far the most rapid rate of increase - and the highest values - of any other submarket in the Trident region.

These new residents, combined with growth in tourism, have yielded significant economic gains for the community (jobs, expenditures, and wealth) and fiscal benefits to the city, state, and other taxing authorities. At the same time, the rise in property values has also brought with it significant increases in property taxes, causing severe impacts for homeowners committed to remaining in their homes.

The creation of new housing opportunities and increasing supply is one strategy to moderate the impact of these eco-

nomic forces. The market analysis concludes that there will be strong demand for housing (between 1800 and 4500 units) over the next 20 years - capturing at least part of this demand to increase supply can in itself have the salutary effect of lowering prices or at least moderating price increases.

Encouraging the production of alternative housing opportunities for low- to moderate-income households and for elderly residents will also increase opportunities for people to remain within the community. For example, with the assistance of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, rental housing can be constructed that includes assisted and market rate rental housing in the same development, under common management.

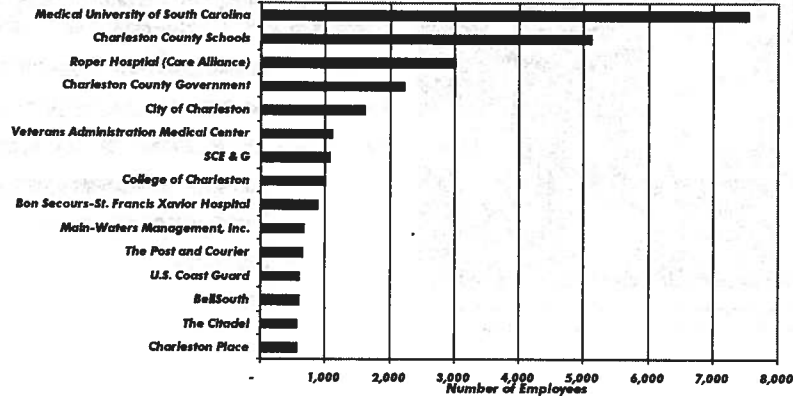
The key is to ensure that a range of housing options continue to be available on the peninsula to ensure that downtown remains a place where a diverse population can visit, work and live at every stage in the life cycle.

Employment: Charleston needs to selectively target new employment opportunities that will diversify the market and attract skilled young professionals to the downtown. Diverse employment opportunities enhance prosperity and the overall quality of life. Jobs with higher paying salaries and advancement opportunities should be encouraged.



The Medical University of South Carolina is the largest employer in the city.

Fifteen largest employers in the city of Charleston



Source: Metro Chamber of Commerce, Major Employers Directory 1997

Without selectively attracting new development, this kind of diversity and prosperity cannot be achieved.

The principal means to achieve a more diverse and sustainable economic base for downtown Charleston is to maintain and expand its position as a center of office employment. The reason for this is simple. The largest and strongest growth in the region's economy is services, the broad category employment that includes business services, professional services such as accounting, law, engineering and architecture, hospitality, health care, entertainment and dining, and domestic services. This category of employment grew in the metro area from about 45,000 jobs in 1990 to 65,000 in 1998, a 45% increase. Health services, restaurants, business services and the hotel sector are projected to lead job growth through to 2,000.

Downtown Charleston has had exceptional success in reinventing itself economically. For most of this century, the economy relied heavily upon the Naval Base, which closed in 1996, cutting 22,000 jobs from the region. The downtown economy rebounded remarkably well and has since, like the region, relied heavily on the service sector.

The dramatic growth of Roper Hospital, the Medical University of South Carolina, with its health care delivery institutions and medical school, and the College of

Charleston has led to further economic prosperity and diversity in the lower peninsula as well as the region. In addition to bringing students, patients, and visitors, these quality institutions have brought stature to the community and a range of jobs for residents that spans the spectrum of requisite skills and resulting household incomes. Of particular note is that, despite the perception that the Charleston economy is heavily based on tourism, the largest tourist-based employer in the city is the Charleston Place Hotel – but it is only the 15th largest employer in the city.

At the same time, many employees and faculty of these employers have chosen to live in the historic neighborhoods, thereby contributing to their restoration and value. This economic gain has led to growth of the city's labor force and a remarkably low city-wide unemployment rate, just 3.1 percent in 1998. Such a low rate suggests that there are unfilled jobs and that further in-migration can be expected as Charleston's many amenities combine with a strong job market to attract newcomers.

The market analysis identified the potential for some 14,000 to 22,000 new jobs within the next twenty years in downtown Charleston. The opportunity now is to encourage, and then retain within downtown, further spinoff businesses. In particular, businesses that will capitalize on the

unique technologies and services emerging from the research base of the Medical University, as well as diverse supporting businesses should be encouraged. Such spinoff businesses will help create a greater diversity of higher-paying employment opportunities to attract and retain young families in the region. Attracting skilled workers is also key to attracting better jobs.

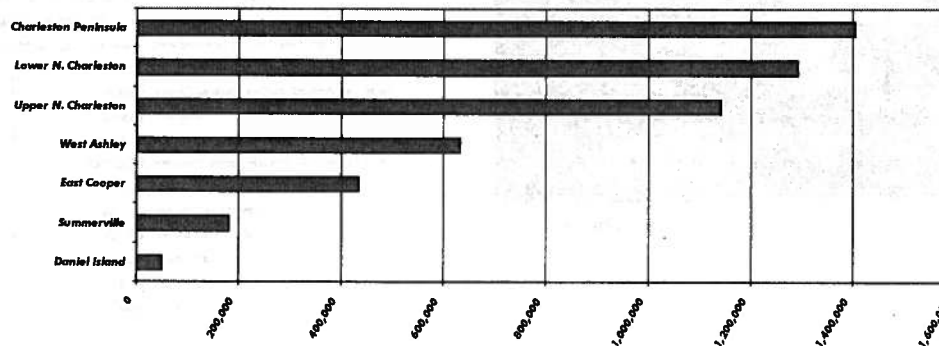
The key employment categories to be encouraged include: business services ranging from low intensity graphic arts and printing to computer consulting and software design; professional services ranging from attorneys, accountants, engineers, and architects, to consultants of all varieties; communications and other information technology firms; headquarters, branch and operations offices of diverse businesses and institutions; high technology firms, although certain ones may require specialized facilities that incorporate laboratories within office-type structures; and leased facilities for federal, state, county and city government agencies.

Office uses: To meet some of the employment goals, Charleston's downtown is the ideal place to attract corporate headquarter offices, high technology and more Class A office space. Developing an office core area will help facilitate these goals.



The principal opportunity for developing the City's employment base is to maintain and expand its position as an office center.

Office space, 1998 (square feet)



Source:
Charleston
Metro Chamber
of Commerce

Approximately half to two-thirds of the 20,000 new jobs created in the service sector since 1990 occupy office type space, creating demand for as much as 2 to 2.5 million square feet of office space throughout the region. Finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) jobs, typically has about 85 percent office occupancy and is heavily represented in the downtown now.

There is clearly the opportunity for the city to selectively target, capture, and create a critical mass of activity of primary office functions, establish synergies and help downtown to remain the regional focus. Growth in the office sector will also help to retain vitality in the wide range of uses that are supported by office jobs: restaurants, clothing shops, cafes, copy shops, etc.

Given downtown's historic qualities and scale, the high rise office towers seen in Greenville or Charlotte are appropriately absent in downtown Charleston. Still, the peninsula dominates the region's inventory of Class A office space and headquarters employment. The city has aggressively sought to maintain this position by recruiting and making available incentives to encourage major firms such as Bell South and financial institutions such as Nations Bank, now Bank of America, and the federal courts to come to or stay in downtown.

Downtown has much to offer the office-based employer and its employees. Like most downtowns, it is the one place in the region where face-to-face contact between businesses and between business and government can be achieved quickly and conveniently. A variety of lunch places and shopping destinations are within walking distance at lunch hour. It further offers the opportunity to walk to work from an adjacent historic neighborhood.

The recent decision of a major law firm to depart the downtown for a signature building in a planned business park across the Cooper River, however, should be considered an important wake up call. While it is understood that there were special circumstances that drove this particular location decision, it focuses attention on the need to plan for expansion of office development opportunities on the peninsula if higher-paying jobs are to be attracted to the downtown area. Failure to do so could lead to a rapid erosion of downtown as a place of employment for the region's growing service sector.

With low vacancy rates and few sites readily available to build new office space, it is very difficult for a business to expand or relocate to the lower peninsula. Further, there is no single area recognized and marketed as the office core of downtown where such expansion is welcomed and facilitated by the city and the corporate community. The city

needs to be proactive in attracting the office sector. The economic analysis indicates significant potential in this domain – between 1,500,000 to 2,900,000 square feet, depending on how aggressively the city pursues new development.

The economic analysis section details a number of recommendations to assist in securing and expanding downtown's position as the dominant office center within the region. These include: compiling and maintaining an inventory of sites appropriate for development of office facilities; creating a high technology business incubator with a focus on medical and bio-technologies associated with and convenient to the Medical University and College of Charleston; supporting a "world trade center" for the Charleston region; and, within those areas targeted for office growth, creating a pool of shared or public parking that will diminish the need for on-site parking. Chapter 7, Land Use Strategy, identifies the areas where new office development can most appropriately be accommodated.

Retail uses: Providing for a broader range of retail will ensure that peninsula residents can fulfill their shopping needs in proximity to their homes, keeping shopping dollars in downtown and reducing the need for automobile-oriented shopping excursions.



More retail along the Upper King / Meeting Street Corridor will provide shopping opportunities in proximity to resident's homes, reducing the need for automobile oriented shopping excursions.

The retail market has remained strong due, in large part, to successful city initiatives and tourism. Tourism in turn is fueled by the historic preservation efforts sponsored by the City of Charleston and individual Charlestonians. Sales accelerated in the latter part of the 1990s, growing at a rate of 3.2% between 1991 and 1994 and 6.2% between 1994 and 1997. Per capita retail sales in 1998 were roughly double the national average. This pace of increase does not go unnoticed by national and international retailing companies who diligently seek robust and expanding markets.

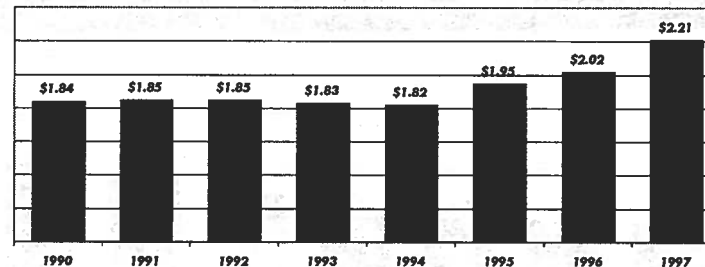
Part of the success of Charleston's "new" downtown has been the attraction of national retail stores to locate on its "main street". Charleston joined many cities across the country in its almost total departure of resident-oriented comparison goods shopping establishments from downtown to the greener pastures of suburban malls. Prior to that, the King Street shopping district had, in fact, been anchored by several national chain stores, including Penney, Belk, Sears, Lerner's, Grants, Woolworth, and Kress. Only with the development of Charleston Place a decade ago did this trend begin to reverse. More recently, the success of these urban pioneers has led to such stores as Ann Taylor, the GAP, Banana Republic, Foot Locker and Saks Fifth Avenue locating on King Street, north and south of Market Street.

This pattern disturbs some downtown patrons, both residents and business owners. It has meant tough competition from firms with national procurement and marketing systems, competitors run by transient managers rather than local business persons deeply committed to the community, higher land values and rents, and demanding customers. In the process, however, it has expanded the customer base and increased the cumulative attraction of downtown as a regional and visitor shopping destination.

As a result, downtown has retained and strengthened its position as the region's fashion shopping district, thus far preventing the emergence of a competing suburban version of a fashion mall. At the same time, local entrepreneurs have dominated the business growth linked to dining, entertainment, and casual tourist shopping, especially in and surrounding the market.

A review of the market power of downtown residents and of the existing retail facilities catering to convenience goods (food, drug store items, hardware, and home improvement), certain hard goods (furniture, appliances), and lower priced shopper goods, suggests an opportunity for further retail business growth downtown, aimed at serving existing and future residents.

Annual retail sales in the city of Charleston (in billions)



Source: City of Charleston Department of Budget, Finance and Revenue Collections

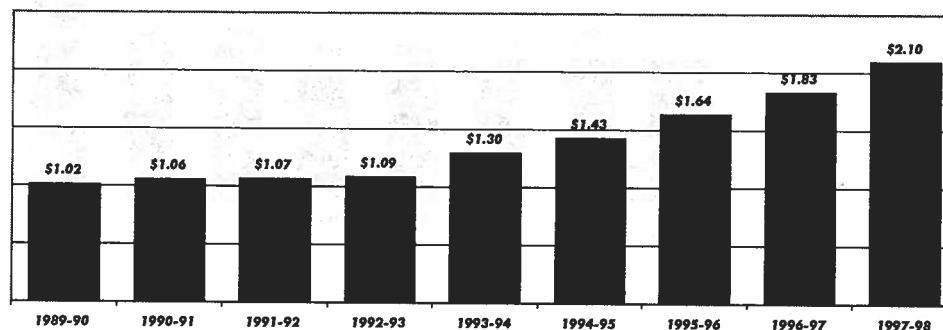
Of the estimated demand for an additional 500,000 – 700,000 square feet of retail over the next twenty years, the market analysis recommends that a significant proportion (350,000 square feet) should be targeted for resident-oriented retail establishments. The goal is to discourage residents from shopping in the suburbs and paying relatively high prices for the currently limited selection of these kinds of shopping opportunities in downtown. Local businesses should be encouraged to meet this need.

The Downtown Plan identifies appropriate sites for the location of regionally competitive "main line" retail shopping facilities to serve peninsula residents with medium-priced general merchandise, furniture and apparel goods. The market analysis suggests that these stores be concentrated, perhaps in a "main street" setting of 100,000 to 400,000 square feet, with conveniently located parking, in order to most effectively create the attributes and convenience of a medium-sized shopping center while meeting local historic district requirements. Special efforts should be made to attract locally-owned stores to the center.

These retail uses should be readily accessible to the Crosstown Expressway in order to capture patronage from across the Ashley and Cooper Rivers as well as people living and working to the north and south of the Crosstown. The Upper King and Meeting Corridor on both the north

South Carolina accommodations tax revenues from Charleston (\$ millions)

Source: South Carolina Department of Revenue



and south sides of the Crosstown provides an ideal opportunity for new resident-oriented, clustered retail establishments. These types of retail centers allow the shopper to take care of multiple trips at one time, thereby decreasing automobile trips.

Hotels: Within the Charleston region, especially in downtown, an aggressive approach to economic development led to a dramatic increase in tourism and in marketing the preserved historic environment to the nation and the world. At the same time, the region's reputation grew as a vacation haven for those who seek waterfront resorts as well as the ambience of the old town and its many quality restaurants, shops, and historic attractions.

Economic success in this regard is vividly illustrated by state tax revenues from overnight accommodations in the City of Charleston. While relatively flat for the first four years of the decade, these revenues have increased 70 percent in the last five years. While Charleston has long been an attractive vacation and tourism area, recent trends show the city has a dramatically improved drawing power.

The *Visitor Accommodations Study*, completed in 1998, provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of visitor accommodations in the City of Charleston. The study revealed that there is significant growth projected in hotels in

the county, however, it is overwhelmingly outside of the city. The total number of hotel rooms in Charleston County increased 97% between 1982 and 1997, to 10,767. On the peninsula, the number of rooms increased in the same time period by 85%, from 1,835 to 3,390. South of Calhoun, the number of rooms more than doubled, increasing from 808 to 1,728. An additional 2,468 rooms are planned, 540 of which are in the city. Of these, only 155 are proposed south of Calhoun. The market analysis projects that potential demand on the lower peninsula ranges between 800 and 1,700 hotels rooms over the next twenty years (40 - 85 rooms annually), depending on how aggressively opportunities are pursued.

Residents have expressed considerable concern about the potential impacts of more hotel development in downtown. In that regard, the *Visitor Accommodation Study* noted that the city does not have control over quantity, quality or characteristics of hotels outside the downtown core. However, that growth can impact the peninsula without providing economic benefits. Accommodating some hotels has advantages.

In particular, providing opportunities for visitors to stay on the peninsula could decrease the volume of cars coming into downtown and foster a pedestrian-oriented, transit-supportive tourism strategy. Adding new hotels will allow

downtown to benefit financially from the investment and increased property taxes. Visitors will also support local retail and other businesses, provide vitality and activity on city streets.

Accommodating more hotels must be part of a broader strategy of selectively dispersing tourism, including hotels, generally north of Calhoun Street and away from the waterfront, which should remain primarily public in nature. With this in mind, the Downtown Plan identifies appropriate locations, such as the Upper King and Meeting Corridor, and the new Crosstown Gateway, where tourism-related facilities can strengthen the urban fabric and create the vitality which arises from a diversity of uses.

More generally, however, the economic analysis clearly recommends that the focus of the city's economic development activities shift from tourism to higher paying, more skilled, office-oriented employment uses, building on Charleston's success while creating a more diverse economy.

Total growth targets

	0 - 10 years		10 - 20 years		Total		Target
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	
Employment (jobs)	6,300	9,900	7,700	12,100	14,000	22,000	14,000
Population (people)	1,800	4,500	2,200	5,500	4,000	10,000	4,000
Housing (units)	900	2,000	900	2,500	1,800	4,500	1,800
Office (sq.ft.)	675,000	1,740,000	225,000	1,160,000	1,500,000	2,900,000	2,500,000
Retail (sq.ft.)	325,000	490,000	175,000	210,000	500,000	700,000	500,000
Hotel (rooms)	600	1,300	200	400	800	1,700	800

4.3. How much growth should be accommodated?

The rationale for accommodating growth and the range of market potential for each sector is set out in Section 4.2. The range, which is based on regional economic projections, provides a framework for determining economic development and land use policies. The low end represents levels of development that will be attained through sheer market forces, with little or no initiative on the city's part. The high end represents levels that can be attained with a more proactive economic development strategy in each of the sectors.

The critical issue is: How much of the growth can or should be accommodated? What are the potential constraints to development? Where should growth be directed?

On the first point, land capacity is not a constraint to growth. Within the *transitional* and *redevelopment* areas, it is estimated that there are more than 100 acres of vacant or underutilized land that could accommodate new development. (Approximately 50% of this land lies within Union Pier which the South Carolina State Port Authority owns and will decide the appropriate time for redevelopment.) This is approximately double the land area required to accommo-

date the high growth scenario over a twenty year horizon. Significant development potential also is in the area immediately north of the study area boundaries, which is equally appropriate for revitalization. New parks are planned and are in addition to the 100 acres of growth area.

A potential constraint to growth is the community's sense that the impacts of development are not yet being adequately managed. The city has undertaken many excellent initiatives, in the domains of tourism and institutional growth, that should be continued and monitored. Chapter 5, *Achieving Balance* recommends additional strategies to augment existing initiatives. The premise underpinning the Downtown Plan is that the impacts of development are manageable.

A second potential constraint is the lack, to date, of a coordinated strategy to manage the traffic associated with new development. Preliminary analysis by the transportation consultants undertaking the *Downtown Traffic and Parking Study* indicates that traffic capacity is not unlimited. Without a significant change in current travel patterns, the proposed MUSC expansion and the full potential of the redevelopment areas – the Crosstown Gateway and the Cooper River waterfront – may not be realizable.

Ongoing monitoring is required. As well, transportation demand management strategies should be immediately implemented, including car pooling, flexible work hours, maximum parking requirements for new development, and a land use strategy that maximizes potential transit riding.

Appropriate development targets

Because of these constraints, the Downtown Plan recommends the lower end of the market potential: 4,000 more people, 14,000 more jobs, 1,800 more houses, 500,000 square feet of additional retail space and 800 additional hotel rooms over the next 10 to 20 years. The exception is the office sector where a more ambitious economic development strategy should be adopted to diversify employment opportunities. A target of 2,500,000 square feet of new office space is appropriate.

Accommodating growth in downtown within the ranges identified above has the potential to improve the quality of life. The challenge will be to reap the benefits for the downtown, without the community incurring impacts. Strategies to manage these impacts and restore balance for the residential community are outlined in the following chapter. The appropriate distribution and land use policies to guide implementation of new development are contained in the subsequent chapters.

Within the transitional and redevelopment areas, it is estimated that 100 acres of vacant or underutilized land exists that could accommodate the targeted growth scenario over a twenty year horizon.

Six areas comprise those 100 acres. The potential allocation of this growth is depicted in the pie charts. New parks are planned and depicted in Section 6.

Ideally, growth should be distributed to strengthen the Crosstown Gateway as a mixed use employment area and much of the Cooper River waterfront as a mixed-use but predominantly residential neighborhood.

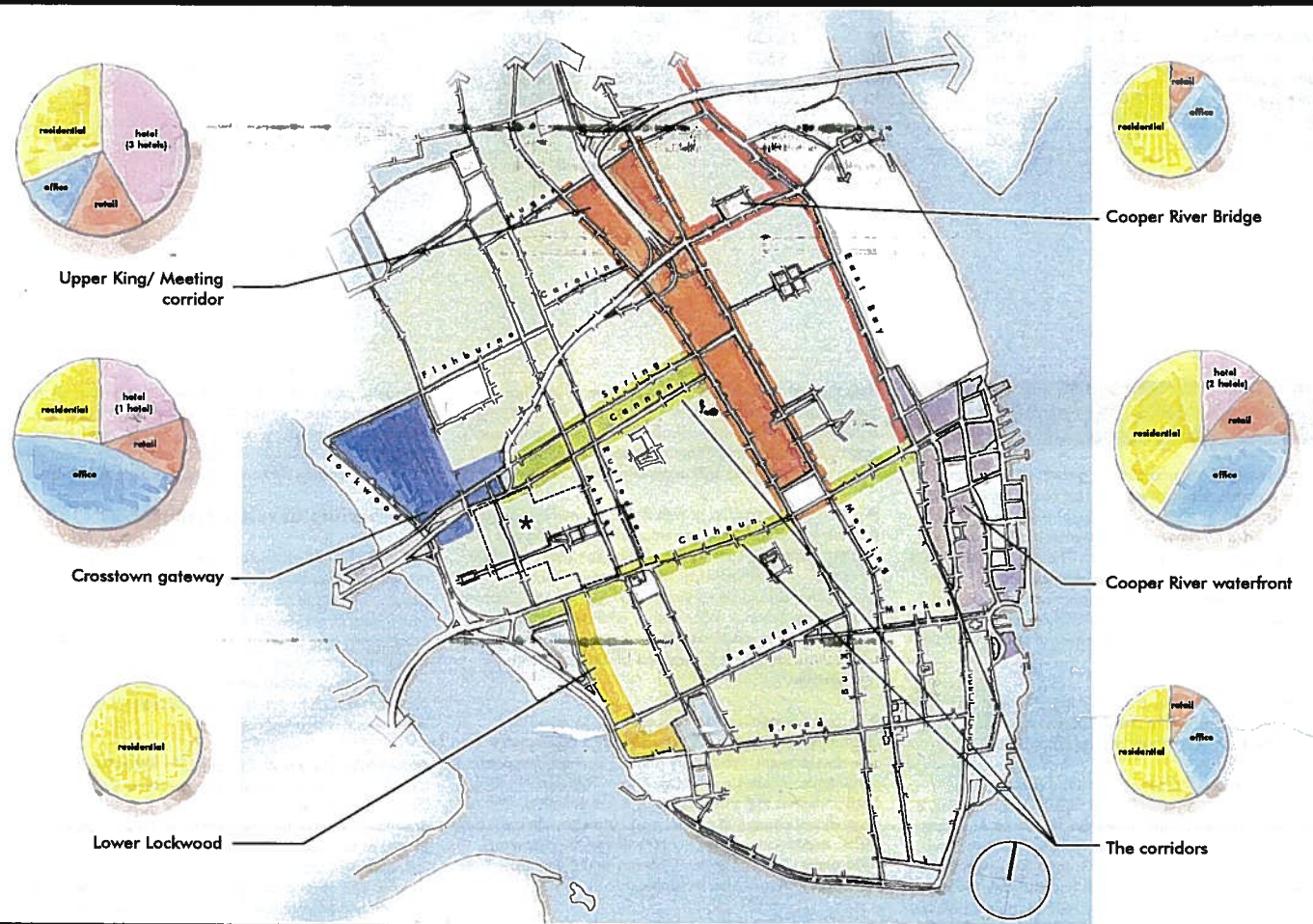
Much of the retail growth should occur in the Upper King / Meeting corridor.

The Cooper River Bridge area and Lower Lockwood will contain infill housing.

Hotels, with the exception of two in the Cooper River redevelopment area, will be north of Calhoun Street.

★ New institutional / office growth will occur in the hospital district, associated with the MUSC. This growth is in addition to that which could be accommodated on the 100 acres of vacant or underutilized lands.

Proposed distribution of growth in transition and redevelopment areas



5. Achieving balance

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a strategy to ensure continued prosperity and a high quality of life. Before considering – in chapters 6 and 7 – where growth should be directed, this chapter identifies strategies for maintaining balance and preserving downtown quality of life as growth occurs.

Charleston is at the forefront of cities dealing with growth-related quality of life issues, forming the basis of its reputation for progressive leadership, a committed community, and cutting edge initiatives. *The Tourism Management Plan*, the *CHATS (Charleston Area Transportation Study) Long Range Public Transportation Plan*, the *Town and Gown Technical Report*, the *Parks Plan* and the many housing programs are each excellent initiatives. Thus far, while successfully addressing the issue at hand, each study was independent.

Building on existing initiatives, there is now an opportunity to work across the boundaries of previous studies, address shared issues and develop far-reaching, common solutions. As more housing, office, retail and hotels are targeted, five broad strategies should be pursued to ensure that balance is maintained and to ensure that growth contributes to

downtown in a way that will improve the quality of life. The five strategies are to:

- increase housing supply and affordability in downtown,
- improve neighborhood and community amenities,
- develop mechanisms to share the impact of growth,
- reduce the reliance on cars,
- mitigate the financial impacts of growth.

Cumulatively, these strategies aim to ensure and preserve the quality of life for residents and downtown as a viable community.

5.2 Increase housing supply and affordability

A strong sentiment exists that rapidly increasing housing prices are marginalizing the existing community in downtown Charleston. Housing is purchased as vacation homes, diminishing the sense of continuity and commitment among neighbors and neighborhoods. Young families and professionals are finding it difficult to afford housing, resulting in a skewed population profile. Increased housing prices result in higher property taxes, which burden long-time residents of the peninsula and exacerbate gentrification pressures in existing neighborhoods.

The City of Charleston is doing an excellent job through a number of initiatives to provide housing for a wide range of people, particularly for persons with lower-incomes. The Downtown Plan aims to increase housing affordability in downtown by increasing the supply and diversity of housing available for homeownership and rental purposes. There are excellent examples of new larger scale rental developments in a number of older cities (such as Quality Hill in Kansas City or Westminster Place in St. Louis, among many others) that could provide models for the lower peninsula.

30% Monthly income available for housing

1999 Income	
Moderate	\$ 1,808.00
Low	\$ 864.00
Very low	\$ 540.00

Source: City of Charleston Department of Housing and Community Development



The narrow streets and compact nature of the peninsula make bicycles an ideal form of transportation.



The existing rail corridor right-of-way should be preserved in anticipation of a commuter rail network between downtown and Summerville.

In order to prevent isolation of various income levels into any one part of the downtown, the Downtown Plan also seeks to increase the mix of housing types throughout the downtown. The overall objective is to ensure that the lower peninsula can accommodate and house the full spectrum of population and income groups, in order to maintain the downtown as an authentic and diverse community - a place where "real" people can live.

The Downtown Plan addresses housing generally. Upon completion of the Downtown Plan, a separate Housing Master Plan should be completed to explore additional mechanisms and programs for providing and financing housing at all income levels, but particularly for lower income earners. Housing is a complex and highly specialized issue that needs to be examined in detail.

The following goals and objectives broadly address housing issues:

Goal: Increase the supply of affordable housing.

Explore innovative mechanisms for financing affordable housing.

Charleston should continue to explore innovative mechanisms for financing affordable housing, including some of the options identified previously in Charleston 2000. These strategies seek to facilitate and encourage the creation of affordable housing by the private sector, through combinations of incentives and/or affordable housing requirements.

For example, Charleston has established an affordable housing trust fund to support affordable housing programs. Contributions are being made from the City capital budget as well as from cash-in-lieu contributions from linkage or housing agreements.

In addition, small increases in density could be allowed as an incentive to provide affordable housing. Special tax policies or districts could be created in which local property tax or state income tax could be abated as an incentive for developers to provide affordable housing. Finally, development charges, application fees, and other charges could be waived in order to reduce the cost of constructing affordable housing.

Incorporate affordable housing into market rate housing projects.

Each new housing development over a certain size (for example 20 units) should incorporate a certain percentage, perhaps 20%, of affordable housing. If required through zoning regulations, affordable housing can be created throughout downtown. The goal is to ensure that a full range of income levels can live in each neighborhood. Studies show that the value of market rate units located near subsidized housing units is not negatively impacted. In fact, neighbors often cannot tell which units are market rate and which are subsidized.

Affordable housing could be provided through the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Housing Authority among others, as is the current practice, or as intrinsically affordable (smaller) units by private developers. Affordable units will provide housing options for households with fewer people, students, young couples, and the elderly - potentially freeing up existing larger housing units for larger families.

As part of a multi-pronged strategy, the Housing Authority might consider the development of projects that include some market housing (potentially at subsidized prices). Such programs have been tried successfully in other American cities such as Milwaukee, where new market housing on city property has helped create a diversity of income levels and



190 St. Philip Street is a good example of neighborhood infill apartments.



494 King Street is a medium intensity, mixed-use commercial building. Similar uses are recommended for the Calhoun corridor. Apartments on upper floors could house students or other appropriate populations.

revitalized an existing residential neighborhood. The proceeds of market rate sales are designated for construction of new affordable housing. Collaboration with market rate housing developers may help facilitate such development.

Consider revising standards to facilitate affordable housing.

Density standards, site standards and the extraordinary costs of maintaining an historic property are a few of the factors that discourage the creation of affordable housing. Renewed collaboration between the housing providers, the Board of Architectural Review (BAR), Board of Zoning Appeals (BOZA) and the preservation community should focus on a set of alternative standards for affordable housing projects. For example, the East Side Design Guidelines endorse the substitution of v-crimp metal roofing as a replacement for a standing seam metal roof. The template must ensure that neighborhood fabric and architectural integrity is maintained. The zoning ordinance should be studied and revised to support continued affordable housing efforts.

Dedicate city resources for creating affordable housing.

The proceeds from the sale of city properties, such as those in the vicinity of the Maritime Center, could be put toward the construction of affordable housing throughout the lower peninsula. In particular, areas subject to gentrification could be targeted to assist residents to stay in their neighborhoods.

Goal: Increase the rate of homeownership for low-income residents

Vigorously pursue existing programs to create affordable housing and increase the rate of homeownership.

Charleston has numerous programs and initiatives aimed at increasing the supply of housing for low and moderate income families and for increasing their rate of homeownership. These programs focus on providing low-interest mortgages, loans to rehabilitate existing structures, developing and managing an affordable housing stock, and fostering partnerships with financial institutions and churches. The City of Charleston, the Housing Authority, federal and state governments and several non-profit agencies are all involved in and sponsor these programs. These programs should be continued and bolstered through additional government and/or private funding initiatives.

Goal: Create more mid-priced housing

Create more rental housing.

Rental housing is an attractive housing option for many people. It is appropriate for individuals who do not want or can-

The changing senior citizen population (65+)

	1980	1990	% change
Tri-County	29,694	43,470	46
Downtown	5,895	3,442	42
Total	34,589	46,912	44

not afford to own a home, providing a flexible and often lower cost form of housing. Some people simply prefer rental housing as a lifestyle choice. A well-planned rental development with effective management can successfully contain a mixture of both market rate and assisted, affordable units, helping to diversify the housing stock.

Encourage mixed use development, smaller units, and higher density buildings.

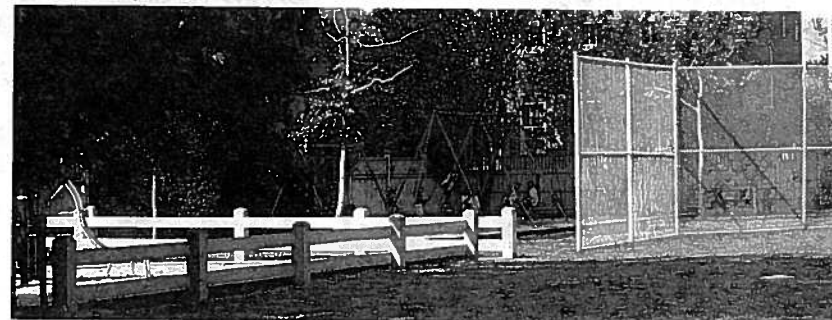
Smaller units that are incorporated into mixed use or higher density projects are inherently more affordable, by virtue of economies of scale, and reduced per unit land price. Smaller units are appropriate for segments of the population such as students, young professionals or empty-nesters who are at a point in their life with more minimal housing requirements.

The zoning ordinance could allow that in some instances, the creation of smaller units be deemed as fulfillment of the affordable housing requirement, so long as steps are concurrently being undertaken to ensure that an appropriate number of family-oriented affordable housing opportunities are being created. Higher intensity is proposed in several strategic locations (described in Chapter 7), however it must be developed in low- to mid-rise forms to be compatible with the existing city.

Over the next twenty years, residential development should be targeted throughout downtown.

Twenty year residential targets

	number of units
King / Meeting	400
Crosstown Gateway	200
Cooper River	715
Corridors	368
Lockwood	100
Total	1,800



Downtown needs to offer amenities and a quality of life that are competitive with surrounding suburban communities.

Create more housing for seniors downtown.

Although senior populations are increasing nationally and regionally, the senior population in downtown decreased 42% between 1980 and 1990. Reasons for this trend are numerous, including: cost of housing, the perception of safety, difficulty in finding housing on one floor without stairs, and the fact that there are only two targeted senior housing developments downtown. To the greatest extent possible, seniors should be mixed in with all age groups to assist them to remain vital, active and integrated with the community. Smaller, ground floor units or units accessible by elevator are appropriate. Where housing specifically geared towards seniors is required, affordable housing funds should be dedicated to this purpose. Appropriate sites should be identified throughout the downtown.

Goal: Ensure the long term housing supply

Identify and preserve sites for new housing.

Identifying sites for new housing units will ease tension between supply and demand, help contain the rapid escalation of housing prices, and help downtown retain its ability to house a broad spectrum of income and age groups. Such sites are recommended in Chapter 7.

Goal: Establish housing targets

To ensure that housing is not eclipsed by commercial development, minimum residential targets should be developed. Targets might be introduced on an area-wide basis, especially for areas where significant development is anticipated, notably the redevelopment and transition areas.

Housing targets can be achieved in a number of ways. The City can simply monitor the residential/commercial balance in target areas and only intercede if the situation warrants it. If the current interest in new residential development persists, free market forces may lead to the development of additional housing.

If more assertive action is required, the zoning ordinance can address the issues in a number of ways: individual sites can be required through zoning regulations to provide a minimum residential development. As regular assessments of this twenty year plan are undertaken, the levels of current and desired housing development can be reassessed. Appropriate rezonings can be recommended at that time.

5.3 Improve neighborhood amenities and facilities

To retain the existing population, attract new families and recapture lost population, downtown needs to offer amenities and a quality of life that are competitive with surrounding suburban communities. Schools, cultural facilities, parks and open spaces, institutional boundaries, and enforcement of zoning ordinances are all critical to ensuring the quality of life for residents in the neighborhoods. The following goals and objectives address these issues:

Goal: Improve the public schools

Strengthen the public school system.

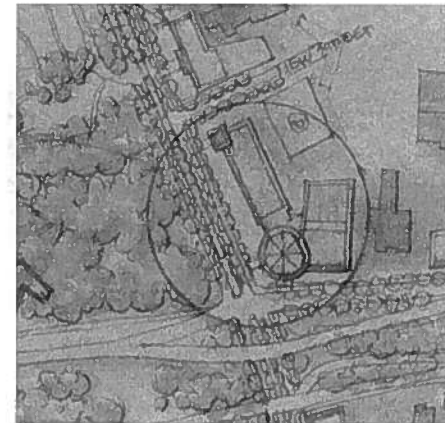
Public schools form a fundamental part of the community and are an intrinsic and crucial element in retaining downtown's existing population and attracting young families back to the downtown. Good public schools can also leave a family more income for housing. The quality of public education is a key element in attracting new businesses to downtown Charleston. Schools also perform a vital function in the neighborhoods, acting as centers of community activity beyond education.



Public schools form a fundamental part of the community and are an intrinsic element in retaining downtown's existing population and attracting young families back to the downtown.



The four open spaces at the intersection of Columbus and America Streets are at the heart of the East Side neighborhood. They are also the front door to a city school, the Trident Technical College, and Johnson and Wales University. New investment in the open spaces would strengthen the neighborhood and these institutions.



The design and siting of new development on Lockwood Boulevard above Spring Street should address the proposed open space across the street.

Issues of education are largely beyond the scope of the Downtown Plan. However, it is clear that the public school system should be strengthened through enhancement of curriculum and renovation of existing physical facilities. The school system needs adequate funding, safe and healthy facilities. The construction of a new building for the Burke High School is an important step in improving education facilities. The Chisholm Street school remains an appropriate site for a number of uses, including an elementary or middle school. The opportunity exists to physically augment this site with the land associated with the adjacent Armory property.

The success of the Buist Academy is indicative of the magnet school potential to keep students within the public school system. New magnet schools could be created provided they are developed for peninsula students. The potential location of a downtown upper level school of the arts would also be an asset to downtown.

Continue initiatives aimed at involving the community.

Mentoring programs, involving the community and local residents, are an important means for improving public school quality and should be pursued. Other programs that involve the community to improve schools should be explored. For example, the resources of the neighborhoods, churches and schools could be organized for community workdays, fix-up projects, and reading to children. Community workdays should focus around adults and children working together.

Position schools as the neighborhood hub.

Schools should be the hub of the neighborhood. Open after hours, they can accommodate after school programs, child care, clinics, and adult education. The family resources center could potentially offer services such as adult literacy, employment and computer training.

The public transit system should support schools as the neighborhood hub. Special passes should exist for children, youth and families. Transit hours should allow for after-school programs.

Goal: Improve open spaces

Update the parks master plan.

Parks and open spaces are an important element in making downtown an attractive and comfortable place to live. The parks master plan needs to be updated to assess all the existing parks and opportunities for new parks. Given the limited space available, all available park space in the downtown is precious. Maximum advantage must be taken of every opportunity.

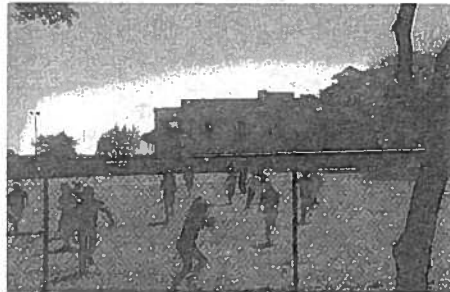
The parks plan should identify opportunities for passive and active open spaces that meet the broad community needs (as

identified ideally through resident surveys) and are closely connected with the neighborhoods. Active parks should include opportunities for small children (tot lots, playgrounds) as well as for older children (sports fields, baseball diamonds and indoor swimming pools). The plan could identify opportunities for creating parks with themes: bird watching, horticulture, environmental interpretive center or trail, playing fields, etc. The Plan should evaluate indoor recreational opportunities such as bowling and skating. Both large and small parks are desirable.

With this in mind, the parks plan should aim to achieve a number of specific objectives including:

- Identification of opportunities for new parks.

Opportunities for new parks, particularly active ones, should be identified within the downtown. New parks might form part of major new developments. They might also be created from existing vacant sites. Small parks can be just as effective and useful as large parks. For example, small parks along King Street could provide respite for shoppers and sightseers. The land by Bits of Lace, just south of Market Street, is an ideal opportunity for such an urban pocket park. Small commercial pocket parks have a long tradition in many urban areas. Paley Park in New York City is an excellent example.



Schools and open spaces for children play an important role in neighborhood life. Opportunities for joint use between recreational facilities and educational facilities should be maximized.



New institutional development should be sensitively inserted within established growth boundaries.



Ongoing monitoring is essential in terms of parking enforcement, student behavior, and student occupancy.

- Improvement to existing parks.

Emphasis must be placed on improving existing park facilities. Diverse child-friendly equipment and programs should be provided. For example, some water fountains and park benches need to be lower. In some cases landscapes need rejuvenation. Multi-purpose buildings should be built or renovated in selected peninsula parks.

Parks also need to be made safer and cleaner. Physical improvements that can enhance safety and amenity in parks include improved view corridors from adjacent streets, lighting, and landscaping treatment. Dereef Park is a case in point. The park, recently constructed, lacks visual access from the street and is located in close proximity to an unappealing hotel, making the park uninviting to local residents.

Improvements in landscaping to create more direct sight lines, lighting, and equipment could all help to create a safer environment. Reconfiguration of the park and adjacent lands, as well as additional points of access, would also help to make it feel safer. For example, the purchase of the land on the south side of Morris Street, the former Simonton School site, for use as a park could help to bring more people into the area and make Dereef Park more desirable. Purchase of the site on the north side of Morris Street, currently owned by the Brooks Motel, would diminish the sense of isolation and help to improve the sense of safety.

- Creation of a recreation complex.

Perhaps one of the most difficult elements to create in the downtown, given the limited space, is a large recreational complex to provide adequate active open space. Accommodating a large recreation or district level park within the intricate fabric of downtown is not likely, nor even desirable from a physical perspective. A more realistic strategy is to develop several small recreational facilities in close proximity to create, in total, a recreational complex.

Two recreation complexes exist downtown but need to be better integrated. On the West Side, the Arthur Christopher Gym, Herbert Hassel Pool, Harmon Field and Jack Adams Tennis Center serve as a complex. On the East Side, the Julian Devine Recreation Center, Martin Pool and Park and the future Marshes East Park can serve as another complex. These facilities should be evaluated to determine what can be improved to create a complex. For example, looking to better connect these facilities was suggested by summer recreation program children who need to cross the City Gym to the Herbert Hassel Pool.

- Maximize the potential for joint use between recreational / educational facilities.

Given the limited space available on the peninsula, the potential to create a school and recreation area should be a key criteria in selecting new school and open space sites.

For example, a relocated Burke High School provides the opportunity to create quality education accessible to local residents while improving community open space facilities. One proposal is to undertake a land exchange with the city and build the new school on a portion of Harmon Park, relinquishing the existing school site to recreation purposes upon completion of the new school. Focusing on highly visible sites, the District 20 Steering Committee has identified several other possible sites.

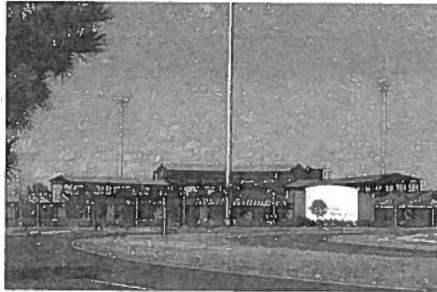
Goal: Continue cooperative efforts to enhance institutional - neighborhood relations

Reiterate and adhere to institutional boundaries.

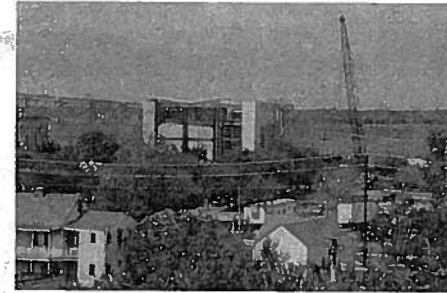
The issues related to institutional boundaries and intrusion into neighborhoods are amongst the most contentious. Both the College of Charleston and the MUSC have established growth boundaries, which must be adhered to and enforced in order to provide certainty and to lessen conflict between institutions and residents.

Undertake a multi-institutional master plan exercise.

Given the limited space available in downtown, it is important to make the most efficient use of all resources. The MUSC is in the midst of completing a plan to accommodate its proposed expansion. The College of Charleston is about to begin such an exercise. However, there is little coordina-



Joseph P. Riley Jr. Park



The SC Aquarium (under construction)

Joseph P. Riley Jr. Park and the SC Aquarium are two major new amenities that add to the collective wealth of the city without adding to the pressures in the lower peninsula. The College of Charleston Arena, if developed as proposed, will have a similar effect.

tion between the various institutions and therefore little opportunity for sharing of resources and facilities.

A coordinated planning exercise should be undertaken to make the most efficient use of neighborhood resources, including shared parking, as suggested in the *Town and Gown Technical Report*, housing, recreational, and educational facilities. It will also provide the basis for continued collaboration with the City, the Town and Gown Committee, and area residents. All of the institutions - College of Charleston, MUSC, Trident Technical College, and Johnson and Wales - should be involved in this exercise.

Johnson and Wales University may potentially relocate outside downtown. Should this occur, an opportunity exists to accommodate Trident Technical College in the city.

However, Johnson and Wales' location on the peninsula provides at least two important benefits. First, the University is an important employer. Second, the downtown location permits students to walk, bike or use transit to commute from home, to school and to work. The city should work with Johnson and Wales to find a campus on the lower peninsula that is suitable to both the University and surrounding community.

Continue efforts with landlords and students.

The quality of student housing greatly impacts the quality of life for local residents. The city and institutions should work collaboratively with absentee property owners and landlords to ensure the maintenance of the rental housing stock in

downtown. The intent is to ensure safe, comfortable and affordable housing and encourage rehabilitation through loans, grants, and code enforcement.

Landlords should be held more accountable. The Downtown Plan recommends that the City explore the feasibility of occupancy permits, renewable every year. Infractions to noise ordinances or the housing code could be registered against such permits. Upon renewal, permits could be withheld from landlords until infractions are remedied. Alternatively, the College of Charleston could implement a housing contract to be signed by all students and landlords as a condition of enrollment. Alternatively, the College of Charleston could implement a housing contract to be signed by all students and landlords as a condition of enrollment.

Ongoing neighborhood and education programs should aim to teach students to be good neighbors. Students should also be encouraged to participate in the Town and Gown Committee.

Goal: Bolster enforcement of City ordinances

Ensure enforcement of ordinances.

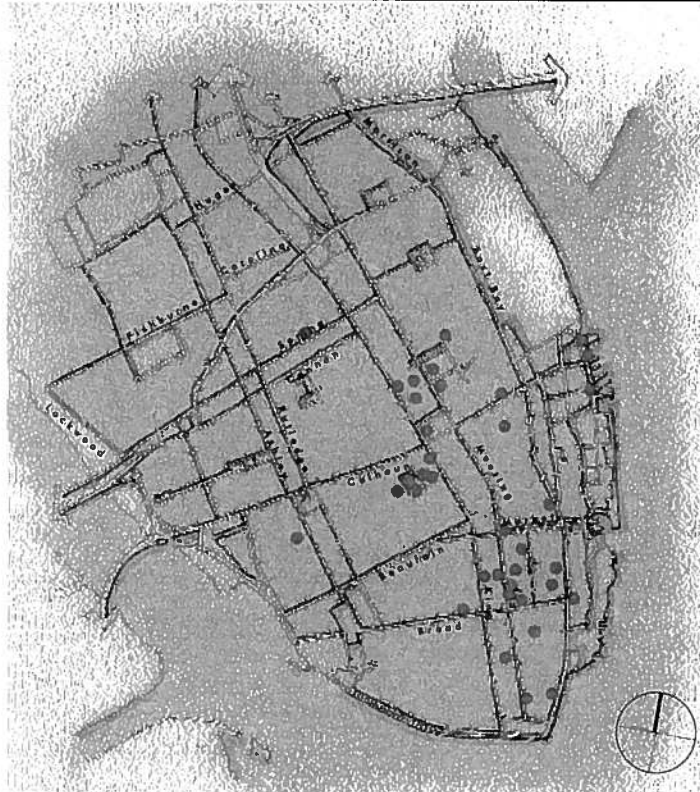
The enforcement of existing ordinances will make the neighborhoods more comfortable to live in. Both the *Town and Gown Technical Report* and the *Tourism Management Study*

recommended a number of ordinances to improve residents' lives. The ordinances, related to students and their behavior, are enforced by city police and the College of Charleston. The collaborative effort at managing impacts has had positive results. For example, in the period since the first *Tourism Management Plan*, bus tour activity in downtown has declined, while walking tours have increased.

Ongoing monitoring is essential - in terms of parking enforcement, trash pick-up, student behavior, student occupancy, and sanitation - to ensure that improvements continue and new issues are addressed. In particular, 24 hour parking enforcement should be introduced in conjunction with the extension of residential parking permits through out the day and night.

Improvement requires enhanced commitment from the city to enforce existing ordinances and / or the development of new ones as required. The convening of a Tourism Forum every year is a positive move in this direction. The proposal to limit bar hours to 2:00 am in areas adjacent to residential neighborhood should be explored and evaluated. Ultimately, the city must be responsible for coordinating efforts related to enhancing the enforcement of the variety of ordinances that enhance the livability of Charleston's neighborhoods.

Existing cultural facilities



cultural facility locations
(historic and cultural sites, museums, libraries and entertainment centers)

A comprehensive plan for the fine and performing arts should be prepared.

Goal: Raise the profile of arts and cultural resources

Recent efforts have been made to invest more of the community's renewed collective wealth in the creation of major new public amenities and cultural facilities. Most notable are the new riverfront park and Union Pier, the aquarium under construction, the refurbishment of Marion Square now underway, and Joseph P. Riley Jr. Park.

The public investments will enhance the quality of life of Charleston residents and offer alternative attractions to visitors. New facilities will take some pressure off the older neighborhoods and business areas of the lower peninsula.

The decision to locate the region's major convention and exhibition facilities in North Charleston was especially beneficial in that it helps further spread the benefits brought by visitors and diverts further impact from the lower peninsula.

A College of Charleston arena, if developed as proposed, will have a similar effect. In addition to facilities geared towards visitors, arts and culture can be better integrated into the Charleston community as an accessible part of every day life for residents.

The following goals and objectives address arts and culture for residents and visitors:

Ensure access to the arts and cultural resources for all residents and visitors.

Ongoing initiatives should be pursued to diversify and support the arts and cultural industry. Affordable places for artists and arts technicians to live and work need to be developed. The study of the arts and culture, including that of regional artists, should be incorporated into the core curriculum of all school grades and programs. Relationships and cooperation with public and private entities who can encourage the study and appreciation of arts and culture should be fostered.

Local artists should continue to be used as educational resources in such programs as Storefront School for the Arts, which provides arts education to under-served children in elementary and middle school. In addition, access to arts and cultural activities can be provided through the City Arts for Kids program which distributes unsold tickets to arts and educational events and identifies opportunities for seating at dress rehearsals. Opportunities for lower entrance fees to cultural and educational attractions should be explored for groups and families of limited means.

A public art policy on new development and construction that includes public funding should be implemented.

Conceivably, this might be 1% of the value of development, and could be used by developers in the commission of a distinct piece of artwork, or the potential integration of special features into the architectural design of the development in addition to the requirement of good architecture.

Over two hundred cities across the United States have created a public art policy in which 1% of the development budget for public construction projects is dedicated to the creation of a piece of art or the integration of special features into the architectural design of the development. Cities such as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Portland, Oregon, Seattle, Washington, and Charlotte, North Carolina could be used as resources for designing a public art policy that will address Charleston's needs.

Create a comprehensive plan for the fine and performing arts.

A Master Plan for the fine and performing arts needs to be created to evaluate existing facilities and plan for new facilities. The Plan would make careful assessment of the needs of the arts community in the context of the broader community to establish budgets for continual maintenance of existing arts venues and construction of new facilities. The Plan should address the needs of the Symphony, Spoleto USA, and other smaller arts organizations. It should also aim to co-ordinate artisans efforts for the greater good of arts programs in Charleston. Opportunities for new locations should be identified.

This study should include evaluations and recommendations for venues including, but not limited to:

- Memminger Auditorium,
- Gaillard Auditorium,
- Garden Theater,
- Charleston Symphony Hall,
- an outdoor amphitheater,
- Art Gallery - (City Parcel A Property),
- the provision of workspace for artists and artisans,
- a cultural center for arts education for children and adults.

Student housing provided by institution

	Number of students	Student housing units	Projected Number of Students
College of Charleston	11,665	2,080	11,665
Johnson and Wales	1,450	470	1,900
Medical University of SC	2,866*	0	2,866
Trident Technical College	2,000	0	2,000

* includes residents

This table shows that a large number of students must find accommodation within the neighborhoods. The institutions should bear more responsibility for housing students.

5.4 Develop mechanisms to share the impacts of growth

The extraordinary growth in the institutions and tourism industry has brought considerable prosperity to Charleston. Notwithstanding the benefits, which are experienced by the broader community, specific neighborhoods feel that they support and have accommodated a disproportionate share of the impacts. For example, residents in the historic district feel that much of the tourism industry is grounded in their individual efforts in restoring historic homes. Similarly, residents near the institutions bear more than their fair share of the burden in accommodating students and their lifestyles.

Charleston has identified numerous individual strategies for addressing growth and its impact. With the strong economy, there is now an additional opportunity to require the proponents of growth to contribute to the betterment of downtown. Institutional, residential, commercial and tourism related growth should all be required to make a contribution proportionate to the amount of growth proposed. Depending upon the proposal, contributions might be made to shared parking, housing, transit, or parkland. Contributions might be made in-kind or in the form of cash payments. The following goals and objectives address these

opportunities:
Goal: Require new development to contribute to betterment of downtown

Establish linkage programs.

The strong economy currently enjoyed by downtown brings with it the opportunity to extend some responsibility for housing development to the private sector, particularly affordable housing, in recognition of the impact of growth on the existing limited supply of housing. Linkage would provide a mechanism to house workers in low paying jobs who would otherwise have difficulty in finding accommodation within the downtown. Downtown housing would be of great benefit to such workers who could take advantage of opportunities such as the ability to walk to work.

Linkage has been implemented in many jurisdictions and could be achieved in a number of ways. For example, commercial development could contribute funds-in-lieu of housing, to be used by the Department of Housing and Community Development to further their objectives. Alternatively, as previously outlined, a certain percentage of units within an otherwise market rate development, for example 20%, could be affordable. Units could be affordable, as defined by the City of Charleston, or inherently cheaper by virtue of being smaller. Toronto and Boston have both tried forms of linkage programs that could be useful prototypes for

Charleston.
Require institutions to contribute to student housing.

Educational institutions have been relying on the larger community to accommodate their student population. The universities must become more proactive in shouldering the responsibility for student housing.

As identified in the *Town and Gown Technical Report*, institutions should be involved in the construction of new residential facilities, on or near campus. Housing could be in rental or dormitory form.

Acknowledging that universities are not in the housing business, there may be opportunities for joint ventures with the city and / or private developers, who would be assured tenants through university housing services.

Student housing could appropriately be located in the corridors: Upper King and Meeting, Calhoun, and the west end of Spring and Cannon. In particular, the north east and north west corners of Coming and Calhoun Streets are appropriate, particularly for College of Charleston students. Student housing in these areas could be used as strategic "chess pieces" to spark the revitalization of these corridors. Housing might be found in new development, conversion of existing buildings, or leasing of existing residential space.

The planned expansion of the MUSC is an excellent opportu-

nity to initiate institutional involvement in building student accommodations, particularly along the western end of the Spring and Cannon Corridor and the Calhoun Corridor.

Require parkland contributions.

New development, which brings new residents or new employees to the city, must accept part of the responsibility for maintaining existing parks and open spaces, which are important public amenities and an intrinsic part of Charleston's heritage.

The 1992 Draft Parks Plan recommended a park land dedication. A parkland dedication or fees in lieu should be required of downtown development and redevelopment.

Such a fee would require state enabling legislation or alternatively could be acquired through an impact fee. Differential rates should be established for commercial and residential development. Residential development could be levied a higher fee than commercial development, in recognition of the greater use of recreation facilities by residents.

The payment in-lieu should be earmarked for the lower peninsula to ensure that it benefits the population in the redevelopment area. Monies could be used for the refurbishment of existing open spaces or the creation of new open spaces.

Use visitor taxes and fees to improve downtown.

There are monies that are earned from visitors, namely the restaurant tax and the tourism fee dollars. There is an opportunity to use these dollars to contribute to the betterment of downtown. Specifically, a percentage of the tourism fee dollars could be dedicated to visible, active enforcement, while a percentage of restaurant tax dollars could be dedicated toward downtown resources, such as public washrooms, and sidewalk improvements, etc.



A great deal of the peninsula's resources, both land and money, are dedicated to the private automobile.

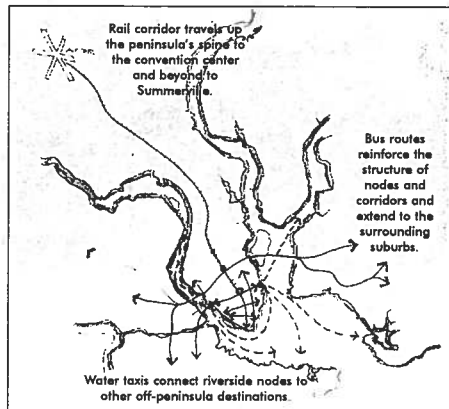
5.5 Reduce the reliance on cars

Reliance upon the private automobile, at the expense of public transit, walking and bicycling, is perhaps the biggest threat to the future sustainability of downtown, its neighborhoods and commercial areas. While these problems are endemic to successful cities around the world, it is particularly so in heritage cities, such as Charleston, where the narrow streets and intimate spaces were not designed to accommodate heavy vehicular traffic.

The demand for parking - a by-product of the reliance on cars - impacts the quality of life. Local streets are congested, making it difficult for residents to park. Valuable land is dedicated to surface parking lots. The quality of the pedestrian environment is diminished by the number of surface parking lots and buildings that locate parking on the ground floor, rather than active uses such as retail stores or restaurants.

The Downtown Plan does not seek to address transportation and parking issues in great detail, but draws upon, and is informed by, the preliminary findings of the *Downtown Parking and Traffic Study* which is being com-

Conceptual regional transit network.



The narrow streets and compact nature of the peninsula make bicycles an ideal form of transportation.



The existing rail corridor right-of-way should be preserved in anticipation of a commuter rail network between downtown and Summerville.

pleted concurrently and independently by the Department of Traffic and Transportation. The Parking and Traffic study consultants have provided insight into levels of development which can be accommodated as well as concordance on measures to ensure current traffic conditions are eased and the quality of life is maintained.

It is critical that the city adopt a more proactive approach to managing transportation. The number of cars driving and parking in downtown must be reduced to support the strategic growth recommended by this plan in Chapter 4. Preliminary conclusions of the Downtown Parking and Traffic Study indicate that new development may lead to road network capacity constraints in parts of the downtown if the choice of transportation mode remains the same.

Transit services are essential for those persons with low incomes and for seniors. With improved service, transit can also be the transportation method of choice for all households and effectively boost their income by eliminating the need to maintain or own a car.

Affordable, reliable and frequent transit needs to be provided for those living in downtown to commute to employment centers out of the downtown, as well as for those people wishing to commute into downtown on a daily basis from the outlying city and suburbs.

An opportunity and an imperative exists to increase the use of other forms of transportation, in particular public transit, bicycling and walking. Numerous studies – the 1982 *Peninsula Traffic and Parking Study*, the 1995 *Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) Long Range Public Transportation Plan*, and the 1995 *Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* – have laid the ground work. Now is the time to enhance their implementation.

Many strategies are available to increase transit use. Land use policies are one of the most powerful factors in promoting public transit. Greater intensity development can be planned along transit corridors. Rights-of-way can be secured to accommodate light rail. Transit route coverage can be increased in growth areas. Pedestrian and bicycle movements can be facilitated. There are also a host of transportation demand strategies, such as designating high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) lanes, creating park-and-ride facilities, flexible work hours, and telecommuting. The following goals and objectives address these opportunities:

Goal: Support public transit, bicycling and walking

Ensure transit-supportive development along the major corridors.

There are a number of major corridors where transit routes are likely to play an important role in the future. At the city scale, the commuter rail line proposed to run from the Summerville area to downtown Charleston is a major corridor. Within the lower peninsula, the corridors include King and Meeting Streets, Spring and Cannon Streets, and Calhoun Street. To make transit viable, a critical mass of people in close proximity is needed. Higher-intensity commercial and/or residential development should therefore be encouraged along the corridors to ensure transit viability.

Plan new infrastructure to accommodate alternate modes of transportation.

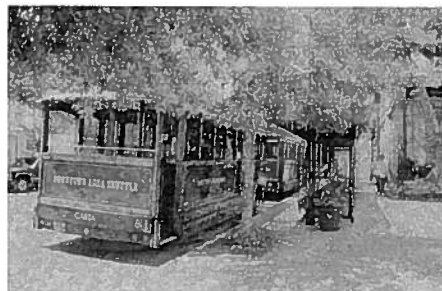
To ensure that transit can play an important role in the future, all new infrastructure, including the Cooper River Bridge, should be designed to accommodate a diversity of modes of transportation, including light commuter rail, high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, transit, pedestrians, and bicycles.

Facilitate commuter rail.

A well-served commuter rail network running from Summerville, to the convention center in North Charleston, to downtown could make a significant contribution to reducing the number of people travelling by car into downtown. Even though the light rail line is a long term initiative, planning should begin now in order to implement it within the twenty year time frame of this plan.

The city has a great resource in the existing rail right-of-way which runs between Summerville and downtown. It is critical that this right-of-way be preserved and reclaimed where necessary to facilitate implementation of a transit facility. The City and the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) have already initiated research into appropriate commuter rail technology, focusing on the FUTREX INC technology which can operate elevated or at grade.

It is highly recommended that the transit facility be at grade and not elevated, at least within the peninsula. An at-grade system would be more easily integrated and contrast less sharply with the historic fabric of Charleston. Using an at-grade system, stations can be in closer proximity, making transit more accessible and effective, along a more extensive corridor. Finally, an at-grade service better reinforces a sense of liveliness at street level.



Opportunities to integrate DASH and CARTA fares, marketing and design should be explored with the aim of enhancing transit usage and making the system less "touristy".

Alternatively, more conventional technologies might be explored that could, for example, be run on the rail line that already runs down the peninsula. In Toronto, a conventional train provides effective, comfortable and highly-utilized commuter service to downtown from outlying areas. The service is always filled to capacity and any additions to routes or service are immediately put to maximum use. A conventional train may be an alternative to investigate.

Encourage residents, students, and commuters to use public transit.

One of the keys to reducing the number of people driving in downtown is to entice them to use transit. CARTA is looking at ways to enhance ridership through increased frequency of stops, reliability of its schedule, and marketing. The DASH system already runs throughout downtown as a visitor service. Its small scale is more neighborhood friendly and it is logical to promote broader use of this system.

The DASH system should be used by visitors and the community – residents, workers and students. Currently, the system is configured to provide attractive service to visitors. Because of the DASH buses' trolley image, the service is not appealing to residents who live and work in downtown on a day-to-day basis. Through a combination of marketing and design, the DASH system should be made less tourist-oriented and

therefore more inviting to all. Changes in signage to be more in keeping with the existing public transit system could help to make the DASH system feel more authentic. A number of modifications are planned and have already been made to make the DASH system more inviting to all.

CARTA can and should play a major role in planning and collaborating with city and institutional planning staff in providing new services and facilities geared toward increasing ridership. As well, CARTA could be the agency that coordinates other efforts to reduce the number of drivers into downtown, such as car-pooling, water-taxis, and van-pooling. The integration of CARTA and DASH fares would enhance the use of transit. Monthly passes for commuters, at a somewhat reduced rate, and free passes for tourists might similarly enhance transit usage.

The Visitors Reception and Transportation Center (VRTC) already functions as an inter-modal transit facility. Strengthening of that function should be an objective of new CARTA and city initiatives. The opportunity also exists to introduce water taxis running between downtown Charleston, Daniel Island, Mount Pleasant, and West Ashley for use by residents, visitors, and commuters alike.

Given their large numbers, getting students out of their cars and onto public transit is also a major initiative that can be undertaken to improve life in the neighborhoods. The students of all institutions need to be considered: The College

of Charleston, MUSC, Trident Technical College and Johnson and Wales. The College of Charleston has initiated transit passes and sold approximately 800 in fall 1998. To encourage even greater use of transit by students, an option might be to include the cost of a transit card as part of each student's tuition costs. Options could also be explored for limiting the use of cars by some students, such as freshmen at the College of Charleston. As more student housing is provided, the need for students to drive will decrease.

Off-site parking and shared shuttle buses for all institutions should also be pursued. The city wide *Comprehensive Plan* should identify sites for park-and-ride lots outside the downtown area. Adding bike racks to buses would also help to encourage student use of public transit.

Create an integrated bikeway and pedestrian path system.

Promoting walking and greater use of bicycles is also an important element in reducing the number of cars travelling into and within downtown. Safe pedestrian connections should be made throughout the downtown. The design of all new parks should consider opportunities for safe pedestrian routes during the day and night. The *Charleston County Bikeway Plan* contains a conceptual bike path system for the whole area.

Detailed routings need to be developed and accommodated in each proposed development along the path. As well, detailed plans should be developed to connect the downtown loop into the regional trail system in Mount Pleasant and West Ashley. Existing bike routes must be reassessed to determine whether they are still valid or if additions or reroutings should occur. Park and ride lots should be developed along the new system to encourage biking onto downtown.

Visitors wishing to park and bicycle in the downtown should be encouraged to use shared parking structures in the gateway areas, in particular in the Upper King and Meeting Street Corridor.

Encourage traffic management techniques that reduce the number of cars travelling at peak times.

Traffic management techniques, such as flex time, car-pooling, transit passes, telecommuting, and park and ride programs should be implemented to reduce the number of cars travelling at peak times. Developers who implement techniques could have their parking requirements reduced.

Monitor road capacity and require alternate transportation strategies for new development.

The traffic consultants undertaking the Downtown Traffic and Parking Study have conducted preliminary analysis of the road capacity, using existing development figures and pro-



Increasing traffic capacity in some areas of the peninsula will only lead to more congestion in other areas. The road capacity in many parts of downtown is already limited and alternatives to the private automobile should be pursued.

jected growth scenarios. They conclude the roadway network in the vicinity of the proposed development appears to be adequate to handle the existing traffic and some of the future development but that monitoring of certain road segments, as yet to be finalized, should be implemented to assess volumes and associated capacity.

To ensure ongoing capacity within the road system, traffic capacity should be regularly monitored and that information utilized in the reassessment of this twenty year plan. Careful study is needed of the numbers of people using alternate transportation and the private vehicle. The impact of downtown residential and commercial developments on the traffic system must also be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

New development should be encouraged (and in high volume areas required) to identify strategies to reduce impacts on the roadway network. Detailed traffic impact assessments should be completed prior to the adoption of plans.

Particular consideration must be given to the proposed MUSC expansion and the implementation of the Union Pier Plan. Under current travel patterns, the existing transportation network may not have the capacity to accommodate the anticipated level of development. The traffic consultants suggest that the traffic impact for the Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan area and the MUSC expansion be reviewed in light of the potential capacity constraints. Given limited traffic capacity, the incorporation of flex times, telecommuting and



A comprehensive strategy is required to reduce the amount of surface parking in downtown. A strategy of shared parking in off-site structures should underpin such an initiative and be implemented simultaneously with a reduction in on-site parking requirements.



Charleston has been very successful in creating contextual, appropriately scaled parking structures. These structures should be used around the clock. They should have retail at grade if FEMA regulations permit.

improved transit usage may be needed to achieve desired development.

Reduce the amount and impact of downtown parking using a comprehensive strategy.

With the number of people driving and living in downtown, there is a significant amount of parking required. Because parking is both expensive to provide and occupies valuable development parcels, it is important to make the most efficient use of existing and future parking facilities. Because parking at grade reduces the vitality of the street and because a large number of parking spaces encourages people to drive into downtown, it is also important to keep parking spaces to a minimum.

The following strategies are aimed to address the amount, location and use of parking.

- Create a shared pool of parking structures.

Rather than requiring each development to accommodate parking on-site, a shared pool of parking should be created, likely in the form of parking structures. These structures would be owned by the city and run by the private parking operator. The shared parking strategy continues and accelerates city efforts over the past three decades. The specific location of additional shared parking structures will be identified by the ongoing Downtown Traffic and Parking Study.

The parking structures, strategically located throughout the

lower peninsula, accommodate commercial, residential and visitor overflow. During the day, they are occupied by office workers, shoppers, and visitors and at night are made available to residents and to staff and patrons at downtown bars, restaurants and other late night venues.

A strategy of shared parking should be continued simultaneously with a reduction in on-site parking requirements.

- **Introduce cash-in-lieu payments.** On-site parking requirements should be reduced to encourage vitality at-grade. In conjunction with reduced on-site parking requirements, developers should be required to provide a cash-in-lieu payment (proportionate to the scale of development) that will be dedicated to the creation of shared parking structures, transit, and/or pedestrian realm improvements. Developers could contribute cash payments to a city authority or CARTA, who would be responsible for distributing fees to ensure improvements and investments as deemed appropriate.

- **Modify the parking permit system.** The parking permit system needs to be modified to alleviate pressure in residential neighborhoods. Currently, as requested by residents in some parts of downtown, residential parking permits apply during the day only. As a result, it is often difficult to find parking on residential streets after hours when the permits no longer are in effect.

The Ansonborough Neighborhood has created 24 hour residential parking permits, ensuring accessibility to parking throughout the day and night. Parking officers are available to ensure enforcement through the night. This policy should be extended throughout the lower peninsula, where desired, and a cadre of enforcement officers hired. The number of parking permits handed out by the city should be proportionate to the curb space available in each area.

Commercial parking permits should also be created in conjunction with the creation of 24 hour residential permits. Commercial passes would be made available to workers in the commercial districts - for example, restaurants and bar staff - to take pressure off residential streets at night. Permits would offer parking at a reduced fee in the pool of shared parking structures in close proximity in evening hours.

- **Modify the parking fee structure.** The city should complete a pricing strategy evaluating strategies to encourage parking in garages. These amendments to the parking fees would encourage the efficient use of the parking structures and would take pressure off residential streets.

A comprehensive strategy is required. For example, parking tickets for on-street violations should be priced to encourage the use of parking structures. The cost of parking in structures at off-peak times should be modified to encourage their use. One idea that was recently instituted is the modification

of fees to encourage downtown and regional residents as well as night time workers to use parking structures at night that are used by office workers during the day. Any new garages at the north end of the King and Meeting Corridor, as well as the new garages proposed by MUSC, are excellent pilot projects for this type of fee structure.

5.6 Mitigate the financial impacts of living in a successful downtown

Rising property values and associated taxes are part of the mixed blessing resulting from the economic achievements of downtown Charleston. In a free market society, rising values and taxes are largely accepted as the consequences of growth except when the impacts are particularly harsh and sustained. Proposition 13 in California in the early 1980s and its offspring in states across the nation characterized a taxpayer backlash to high growth with exploding property values and property taxes at that time.

Residents at all income levels are financially stressed in the current climate of Charleston's lower peninsula. The causes are threefold. Property values increase due to the enhanced desirability of the historic area as a place to live and own homes. Property taxes increase due to regular property value reassessment. Finally, the cost of restoring and maintaining historic properties is extraordinary. Residents are in a dilemma. For many, the only way to benefit from their now enhanced property value is to move away. Others are forced to divide homes into rental units which further exac-

erbates parking conditions on residential streets.

The question in Charleston is: Do the current circumstances merit any attempt to reverse or halt the economic forces that underlie increases in demand for historic housing or tourism? Even if there were such a desire, is it really possible to effect such a reversal and at what price in unintended consequences? The answer to this question is one to be forged in the forum of local government and public policy setting. The plan will not attempt a single answer.

However, the following strategies afford a possible means of achieving some moderation and shifting of impacts of these economic forces in order to assist residents to stay within their community:

Assist residents by managing the increase in housing prices and property taxes.

Establish a mechanism to mitigate the financial impacts on residents.

The Tourism Management Plan recommended that a committee be established to examine the cost-to-benefit equation of tourism and ways to reduce the financial burden on the downtown homeowner. The Downtown Plan fully supports the creation of such a committee.

Measures that might be explored include: increasing loans and grants for preservation of historic homes, implementing historic tax credits for residential purposes, and phasing in property tax increases over a number of years with special measures for senior citizens or persons on fixed incomes. The implications of increased housing prices and associated property taxes for homeowners are being addressed at the State Legislature. Options that spread the impacts across the city and away from neighborhoods experiencing the highest increases are being considered.

Likewise, alternative sources of revenue should be devised to reduce reliance on property taxes in local government funding. Sources could include additional sales taxes, especially those targeting tourism and entertainment, and a regional earnings tax. In order that such a tax not be a deterrent to business in the downtown or the peninsula, it would be best applied on a regional or multi-county basis.

Goal:

Accord special consideration for areas where residents are vulnerable to displacement.

The minority population of the peninsula has dropped rather precipitously for the past two decades. The reasons are complex, although two factors are likely most important. The first reason is the attraction of a more suburban lifestyle and schools, either further north on the peninsula or in the city's

suburbs. The second is the economic push from higher property values and taxes. Some see this "push" as an opportunity to exchange older, often deteriorating homes for newer property further north. Others view this as "gentrification," or displacement, which has more negative connotations.

This trend has slowly crept northward, impacting virtually all of the peninsula. Most recently Cannonborough / Elliottborough has experienced dramatic increases in property value and numerous changes in ownership. The East Side neighborhood is just beginning to experience the impact; the West Side has not yet felt its effect. Efforts are needed to enable people to choose to remain in their neighborhoods.

Attention has recently focused on this trend due to the College of Charleston's proposal to build a new arena, privately sponsored conference center, and commercial development along the Upper King and Meeting Corridor. Concern has been expressed that the development bring gainful employment opportunities in addition to service jobs, that neighborhood retail uses remain affordable to existing residents, and that housing prices do not increase through the influx of students and other more affluent residents. In other words, citizens want to be assured that the normal impacts of gentrification are mitigated.

Partnership with the community is essential and, in fact, initiatives to that effect have begun. The *Black Business Development Think Tank* was formed to stimulate ideas on

how the East Side and adjacent neighborhoods could best benefit from the proposed arena. The College and the arena developer have also been in discussion with residents since announcement of the proposal. Efforts are also required to ensure that housing opportunities remain affordable and available to existing residents. Similarly, efforts are also needed to ensure that small local business opportunities can remain affordable and available.

A number of avenues can be explored. In this case, opportunities include: the sharing of new facilities between the College and the community, provision of recreation, after school care, or mentoring between students and residents, and funding for new or rehabilitated housing. In order to further the exploration of this displacement issue in general, a Working Committee should be established that includes institutions, the business community, residents, and city officials. The objective is to ensure that educational and private objectives also achieve neighborhood objectives.

Individual homeowners play a role in the declining minority population. A coordinated effort to not sell their homes and businesses will dilute the impact of gentrification, allowing the community to continue to have a stake in the downtown. Ideas for bolstering life in downtown include educating homeowners regarding alternative uses for their property, such as adding units or a neighborhood-oriented store where permitted. Another idea is voluntary rent control, where participating landlords are given tax breaks.

From a physical perspective, there is an opportunity to reinforce neighborhoods. For example on the East Side, the relocation of the Cooper River Bridge provides an opportunity to build new housing and expand community facilities on the newly vacant land. Strategic development of housing and facilities will extend the neighborhood fabric north, thereby restoring the linkage between former communities.

Finally, the north end of downtown is an excellent opportunity to implement zoning ordinance revisions that facilitate new and rehabilitated affordable housing. A concerted, collaborative effort is required of the community, the city, and affordable housing providers to bring policy recommendations to fruition where they have previously fallen short. Clearly, a multi-dimensional, concerted strategy is needed to buffer vulnerable communities from dislocation and dispersal.

Retain and encourage minority businesses.

There may be some departure of minority-owned businesses from the lower peninsula, particularly those catering to the African-American community. This loss of diversity is regrettable as it diminishes the richness and authenticity of historic Charleston. Strategies exist to moderate or offset these forces and encourage minority business development.

For example, the city's current efforts to counsel minority businesses should be continued and intensified. Minority hiring is encouraged. Also, certain preferences could be given

in procurement of supplies and services. Larger businesses could also be encouraged to do the same. Small minority businesses could also be exempted from parking, park land and affordable housing ordinances.

A minority business "round table" organization should be created to facilitate communication between business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. The focus should be on minorities serving the minority community and minority businesses competing across racial lines. Minority businesses should be encouraged to take advantage of growth that will occur over the next twenty years.

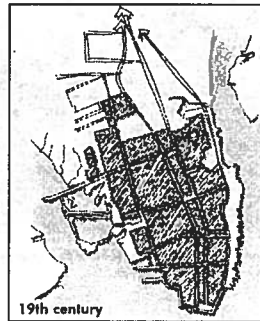
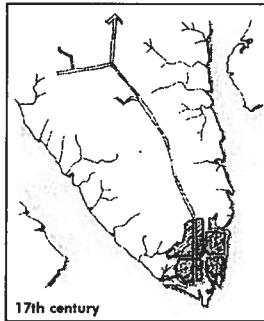
The City's Minority Business Enterprise Office is starting a Minority Business Venture Capital fund. While this fund would assist in business start-ups, its primary focus should be on assisting established, small firms in obtaining equity capital to expand and capitalize on market opportunities. The fund should be run independently of politics with underwriting policies that result in a return on invested capital that is commensurate with the risk incurred.

**Directing growth to reinforce
the city's character**

1. The Charleston downtown plan is a comprehensive study of the area's history, culture, and economy. It provides a detailed overview of the city's development over time, from its founding in the 17th century to the present day. The plan also identifies key areas for future growth and development, and offers recommendations for how to best manage these areas.

2. The plan is organized into several sections, each focusing on a different aspect of the city. The first section, "History and Culture," provides a detailed overview of the city's past, from its founding to the present day. The second section, "Economy and Development," discusses the city's current economic situation and offers recommendations for how to best manage its future growth. The third section, "Transportation and Infrastructure," discusses the city's current transportation system and offers recommendations for how to best manage its future development. The fourth section, "Environment and Recreation," discusses the city's current environmental situation and offers recommendations for how to best manage its future development. The fifth section, "Community and Social Services," discusses the city's current social services and offers recommendations for how to best manage its future development.

6. The urban structure



6.1 Introduction

Where should growth be directed? Where does it make sense within the context of the existing city? Growth needs to be directed to reinforce the city structure, the broad shape of the city's built fabric. Charleston's physical evolution has provided a strong foundation on which to build.

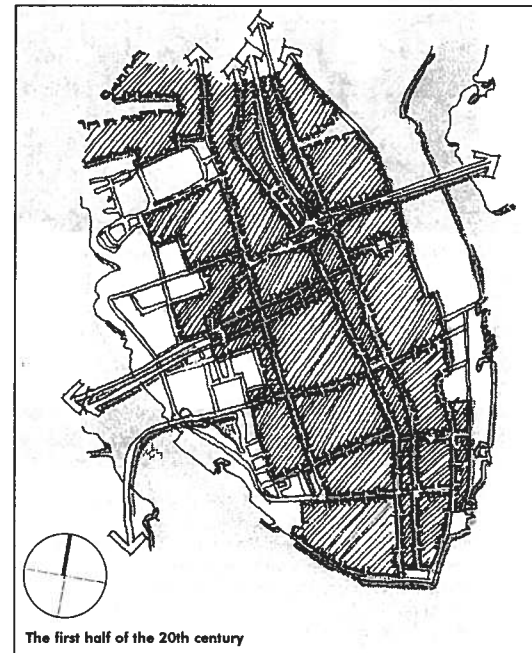
Charleston emerged from its early form as a walled, port town on the Cooper River. Growth occurred along the Cooper River waterfront, followed by King and Meeting Streets - parallel spines on higher ground. Wetlands were filled in to create wharves and other port-related activities. The principal north-south routes were reinforced by the rail line and by a set of perpendicular spines: Spring Street, Broad Street, Calhoun Street and Market Street.

Within this structure, a series of neighborhoods emerged: Ansonborough, Cannonborough, Elliottborough, Charlestowne, Mazyck-Wraggborough, Harleston Village, and the East Side. Due to a series of man-made and natural disasters, there was relative inactivity in terms of development in the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries. The historic city was left largely intact.

Institutions took root: the Navy, the South Carolina State Ports Authority, the Medical University of South Carolina, the College of Charleston, Trident Technical College, and Johnson and Wales. Particular parts of the city fabric developed specialized vocations. For example, the intersection of Meeting and Broad is known as the "four corners of law." The Cooper River waterfront, changing its role, is gradually evolving from a working port to a recreational and leisure amenity.

The majority of downtown possesses characteristics that are universally sought after - high-quality architecture, intimacy, a mix of uses, pedestrian quality, a sense of place - and now serve as a model of urbanism.

In the post WW II era, Charleston has been pressured by the same forces impacting many American cities, mainly the car and competing suburban communities. In areas where the city fabric is less consistent, its integrity is challenged by building forms that are more car-oriented and suburban in form and therefore do not fit well within their context. For example, the Ashley River waterfront, historically characterized by lowlands and marshes that were difficult to develop, was later developed with roads and buildings that are car-oriented and suburban in form.



Before WWII growth occurred along a series of parallel and perpendicular spines between which neighborhoods grew. The most intense urban fabric continues to follow the King and Meeting Corridor. The waterfront is less intensely developed.

There are four strategic ways to add new layers to reinforce the city structure:

- reinforce the nodes and corridors,
- create new areas on both riverfronts that extend the city fabric,
- support the existing neighborhoods with compatible infill development,
- enhance the public realm.



The King Street corridor supports most of downtown's retail.



Marion Square is the node at the intersection of the King, Meeting and Calhoun Corridors.

6.2 Nodes and corridors

Downtown Charleston is defined by an armature of north-south and east-west corridors. The corridors support most of downtown's retailing and are the key to accommodating new growth without impacting neighborhoods. In some places, the corridors are weakened through demolition or surface parking lots. New development at greater intensity can reinforce and redefine these areas. Charleston's waterfront serves as another type of corridor. There are now opportunities to branch out and create new places along both rivers. The following goals and objectives address these opportunities:

Goal: Reinforce the corridors and nodes.

Fill in the gaps with compatible development and increase the density.

Corridors of intensified development are key to a viable transit system and to accommodating more housing and employment at a safe distance from residential neighborhoods.

One of the single largest opportunities in downtown Charleston is to fill in and intensify the underutilized areas of the main corridors. Within the context of an urban downtown, underutilized sites are either vacant, occupied by surface parking lots, only partially developed, or dilapidated. Virtually all of the underutilized sites are north of Calhoun Street.

The greatest density should be developed along Upper King and Meeting Streets – the central spine – that has large gaps in proximity to the Crosstown. Lower density is appropriate along the secondary corridors: Calhoun, Spring, and Cannon and East Bay.

In intensifying the corridors, the challenge is selectivity: target those uses that will most contribute to the city and ensure that new development will be compatible with the existing urban form. Generally, intensification should occur without any increase in height rather through more efficient use of the lots, creating dense, low-rise structures.

Mark the crossroads and the water's edge.

Where the corridors meet the water and where the east-west corridors meet the north-south corridors there are opportunities to create focal points. Focal points are places of intense public activity and life, where the public realm invites people to use the streets and the parks. Along both rivers, focal points will intensify the public experience of the water. Focal

points can be created within the heart of the city, punctuating the urban environment.

Each focal point will have a unique treatment, depending upon its context. A focal point might be created by a gesture as subtle as a sculpture. It might be more elaborate: intensification of development, a civic presence, concentration of retail and / or housing, landscaping, or a strong architectural feature. The goal is the creation of a destination, a place where the public is comfortable to linger. Some focal points already exist at the water's edge: White Point Gardens and the City Marina for example.

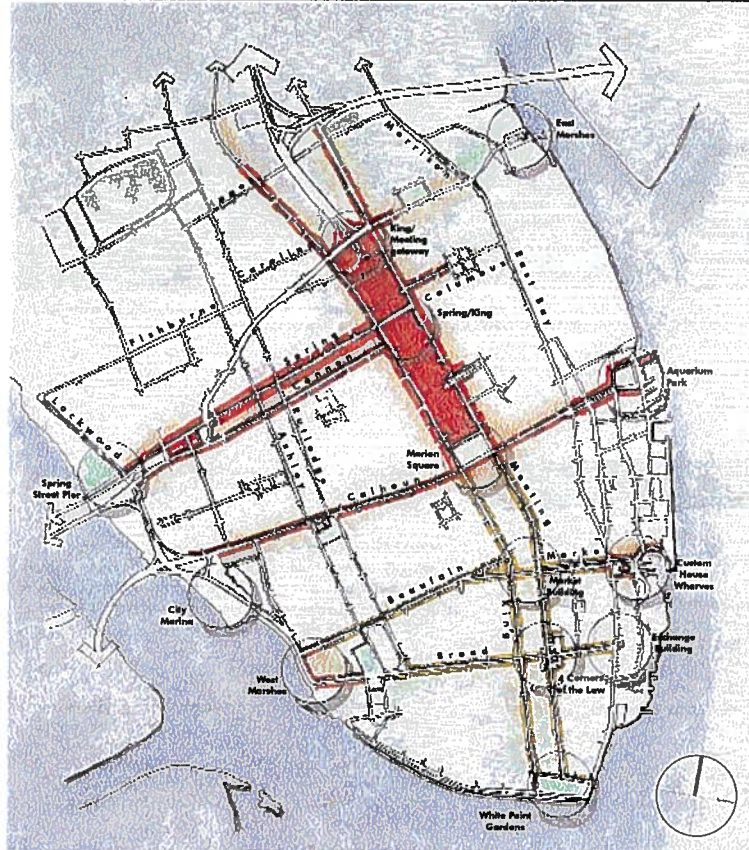
Along the Ashley River waterfront, new focal points should be created at the following termini:

- Spring Street at the Spring Street Pier
- Broad Street at Lockwood Drive

Along the Cooper River waterfront, focal points should be created at the termini of:

- the old Cooper River Bridge at East Marshes
- Calhoun Street at Aquarium Park
- Market Street at the proposed Custom House Wharves

Existing and proposed nodes and corridors



Corridors/nodes for intensification.



Stable corridors and nodes.

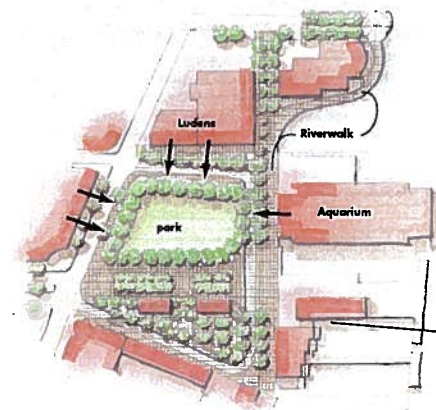


Node

Downtown Charleston is defined by an armature of north-south and east-west corridors. The corridors support most of downtown's retailing and are the key to accommodating new growth without impacting neighborhoods.



The new SC Aquarium will be the park's landmark.



A new node is being created where Calhoun Street meets the Cooper River. It will be a place of intense public activity and life. A new open space will be framed by commercial and institutional buildings. A transit connection should be made to the new docks.

The intersection of the main north-south and east-west corridors within the city are also appropriate locations for focal points. New focal points could be created. Others already exist but could be studied and reinforced through landscape or streetscape treatments. Opportunities for reinforcing focal points should be initiated as new developments and initiatives come forward.

The following intersections should be considered:

- King and Spring Streets,
- King and Calhoun Streets at Marion Square,
- Meeting and Broad Streets, the "four corners of law",
- Meeting and Market Streets at the Market Building.



There is a great deal of underutilized land along the peninsula's edges. The land to the east of Lockwood Boulevard could be developed in a manner much more in keeping with the historic city fabric, creating a new western city face that overlooks the water.

6.3 The waterfront

Downtown is entirely surrounded by the Ashley and Cooper Rivers. Continuous access to the water is really only possible at the tip of the peninsula – between the Waterfront Park and the US Coast Guard Station along Lockwood Boulevard, Murray Boulevard and East Battery. An opportunity now exists to create new places along the waterfront, making the river's edge a much greater amenity, more accessible and raising its profile within the downtown. The following goals and objectives address these opportunities:

Goal: Reclaim vacant lands along the waterfront.

Extend the city fabric.

The most developed part of downtown runs down the center spine while the lands along both sides of the peninsula lie largely underdeveloped. The opportunity exists to extend development out to both river edges.

Along the Cooper River waterfront new development can reinforce the emerging Upper Concord Street Neighborhood on the riverfront and provide new cultural and educational

venues north of Calhoun Street. The implementation of the Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan is a strong gesture in this regard.

Along the Ashley River waterfront, there is an opportunity to use infill development along the east side of Lockwood, both north and south of the Crosstown, to create a western face to the city that looks out over the water and repositions this edge as a "front door" to the peninsula.

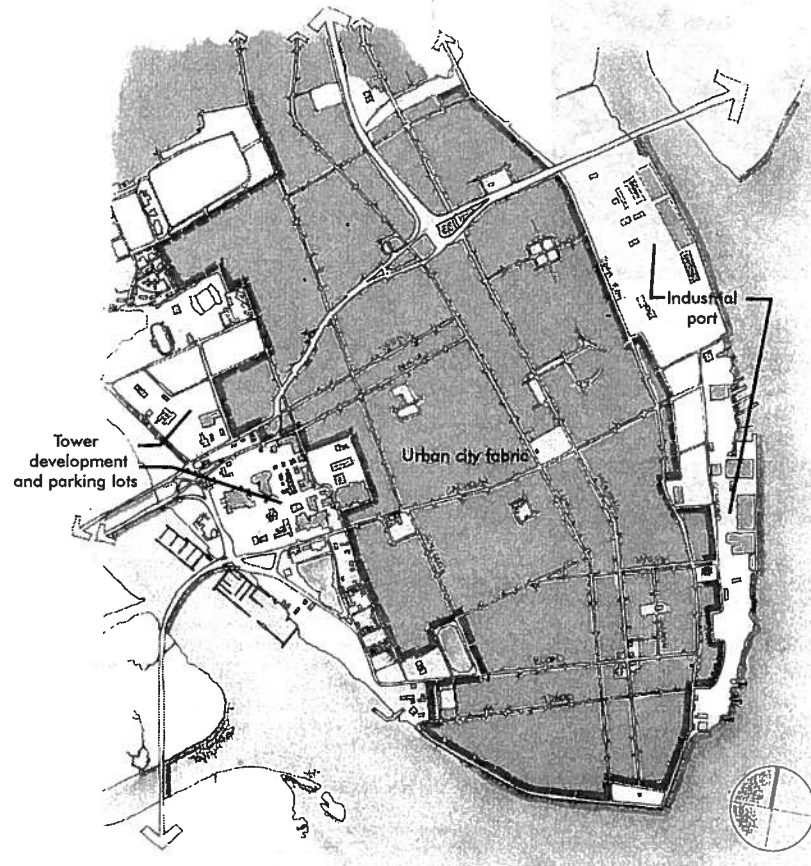
Extend the streets and blocks.

Downtown Charleston's fine street and block pattern is one of its defining features. Set on two intersecting grids, narrow streets criss-cross the peninsula, forming an intricate web of small and often irregular blocks resulting in a highly interesting and explorable environment. It creates a multiplicity of routes, a comfortable pedestrian environment, and small scale buildings.

Historically, neither the Cooper River waterfront nor the Ashley River waterfront were easily accessible by road. The Port uses along the Cooper River had only one or two major access points to large parcels of land that edged the river.

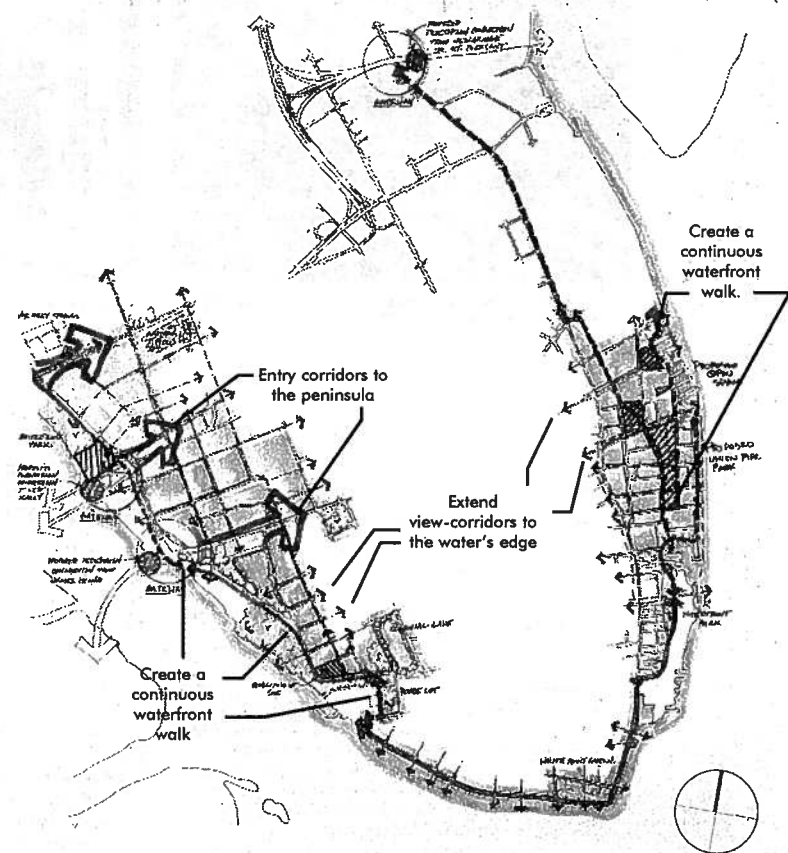
Along the Ashley River waterfront, first the marshes and now Lockwood Boulevard and the medical complex, create the perception that the river is inaccessible.

Existing extent of the urban fabric



Much of the land at the rivers' edges is developed as industrial port or surface parking lots. This pattern of development is out of character with the densest urban fabric of the peninsula and isolates the city from the water's edge.

Proposed extension of the city fabric to the water's edge



As port uses relocate and the hospital district intensifies, there is an opportunity to extend the city's fine grain of streets and blocks to the water's edge and to create new housing, employment opportunities and open spaces.



Waterfront Park is one of the places on the peninsula where the water is easily accessible to the public.



Existing view corridors to the water should be preserved. In the redevelopment areas, existing streets and view corridors should be extended to the water or open space's edge.

Charleston's streets and blocks could be extended to make more of the water's edge accessible. New development along the Cooper River waterfront should be structured around a network of streets and blocks that facilitates connections and views to the water, as proposed in the Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan. Development should reflect the scale and qualities of the unique street and block network found in the historic downtown to the greatest extent possible and therefore large blocks are strongly discouraged.

Along the Ashley River waterfront the lands are already developed with "hospital district" uses. The MUSC is planning a major expansion of its educational and institutional facilities. New structures should be sited to frame an inviting public realm and to form view corridors to the water. Wherever possible, streets should be extended or new streets added to improve connections between the hospital district and the surrounding areas, including the waterfront. As a rule, existing streets should not be closed.

6.4 Neighborhoods

The neighborhoods – gracious and intimate – define downtown Charleston. Having evolved from the former boroughs, each neighborhood is defined by a unique sense of place to which residents feel strongly attached. Signature streets and open spaces grace many of the neighborhoods, providing a distinct focal point for community and social activities.

The friendly character is formed in large part by the scale. Buildings from all eras blend together seamlessly, showing great respect for the traditional grain and scale of the city. Low-rise houses, with piazzas running along one side, represent the modification of the single house originally developed in Barbados. The housing stock is at once coherent and consistent, unique and charming. Even the College of Charleston, despite its expansion, has worked with and retained the scale of the adjacent neighborhoods. The following goals and objectives address the neighborhood issues:

Goal: Support the neighborhoods.

Fill in vacant sites with development that respects the neighborhood form.

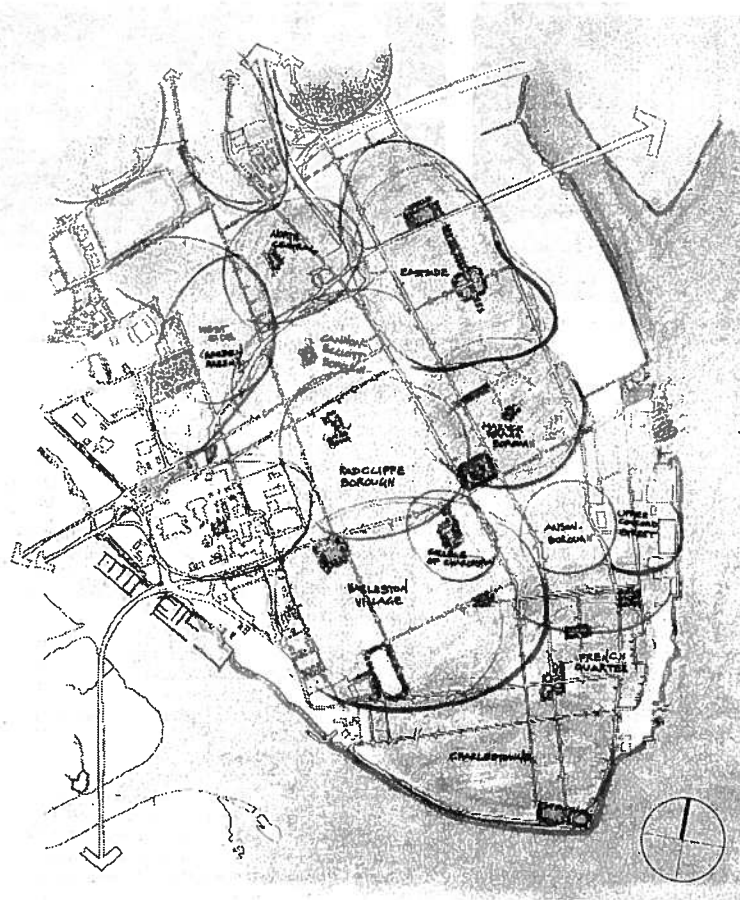
Throughout the downtown, there are vacant sites poised for compatible infill development to ensure the continuity of the neighborhood fabric. Most of these sites are concentrated north of Calhoun Street. New infill development should respect the existing neighborhood scale and form. With the exception of Union Pier, there are only a few vacant sites south of Calhoun Street.

Increase the mix of uses.

The downtown incorporates a broad mix of uses. Retail corridors, such as King and Meeting Streets, border the edge of most of the neighborhoods. The French Quarter, together with Harleston Village, embrace a wide diversity of uses and represent perhaps the most mixed neighborhoods.

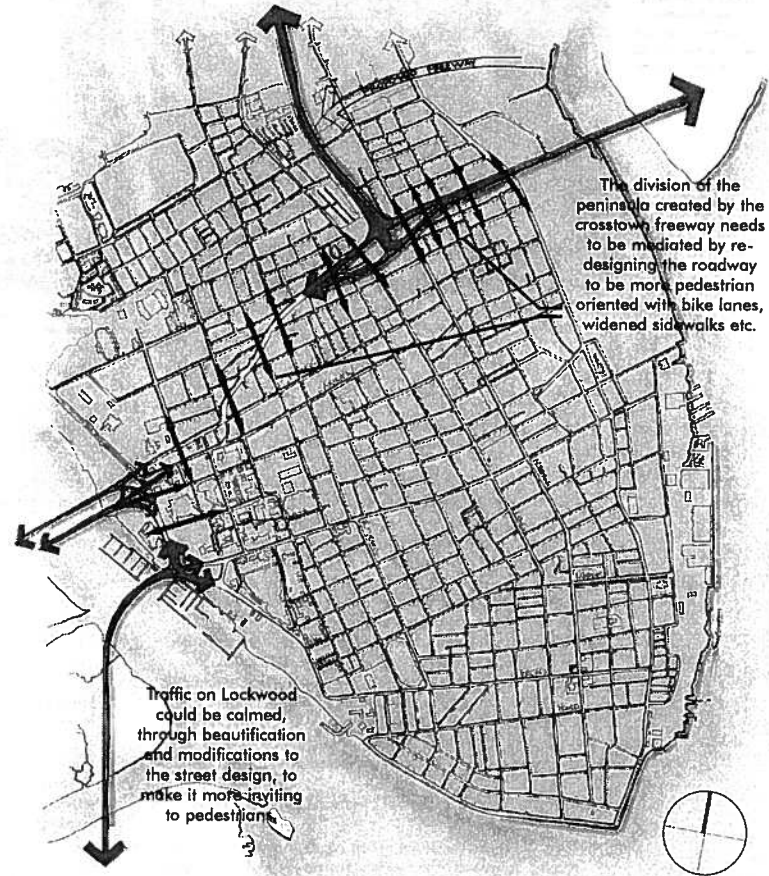
Over time, residential neighborhoods have become increasingly homogeneous regarding use. For example, corner stores, which once dotted the neighborhoods, are no longer permitted under the zoning ordinance. As a result, corner storefronts lie vacant. Certain neighborhood boundaries are drawn to not include King and Meeting Streets.

Existing neighborhoods



Charleston is made up of a collection of neighborhoods.

Existing regional access routes



Regional access routes create barriers within neighborhoods and to the water's edge.

The division of the peninsula created by the crosstown freeway needs to be mediated by re-designing the roadway to be more pedestrian oriented with bike lanes, widened sidewalks etc.

Traffic on Lockwood could be calmed, through beautification and modifications to the street design, to make it more inviting to pedestrians.

All of Charleston's neighborhoods need to be supported, but not all in the same way:



Stable neighborhoods need protection from inordinate pressures for growth.



Neighborhood edges in **transition** provide opportunities to attract reinvestment for infill development.



Neighborhoods in **redevelopment** areas need to be carefully designed to reflect the quality and scale of existing neighborhoods.

A careful mix of residential and neighborhood-oriented commercial uses will increase vitality and help to keep downtown as a viable, livable community. A greater mix also allows residents to meet some of their day-to-day needs within walking distance of their homes, reducing dependence on cars.

Residential neighborhoods should stay primarily residential, but should allow for some other compatible uses. Neighborhood-oriented retail uses could be introduced into vacant corner stores where appropriate and viable. Neighborhood boundaries should be configured to embrace the retail corridors. Charleston Village Neighborhood should be redefined to include the west side of King Street. The Ansonborough Neighborhood and the French Quarter should be redefined to include the east side of King Street.

Reduce the barrier effect of regional access routes.

There are several regional access routes that find their way into the downtown. Their wide rights-of-way and high speeds mark an abrupt departure from the character of the roads south of Colhoun. As a result, they disrupt the continuity of the neighborhoods through which they run and make the lands along their edges difficult to develop.

For example, the Crosstown Expressway divides the peninsula into north and south portions. Similarly, Lockwood Drive functions much like an on/off ramp to the Ashley River Bridge, separating the waterfront from downtown.

By redesigning these streets, where possible, to feel and look more urban, with slower traffic and more inviting pedestrian environments, adjacent lands will be more developable, encouraging repair of neighborhood fabric and a greater sense of continuity.

"Taming" streets has already been identified within the Charleston community as an important goal. The Spring-Cannon Corridor Study recommends traffic calming measures along the Crosstown and Spring and Cannon Streets. It recommends that the Crosstown be redesigned as an avenue to create a more comfortable pedestrian environment and to make traffic function in a more urban fashion. These initiatives will help to reconnect the Cannonborough / Elliottborough Neighborhood with the West Side and North Central Neighborhoods north of the Crosstown. Many other streets within downtown Charleston could benefit from traffic calming.

Similarly, provided that it can retain its role as a major arterial, there may be an opportunity to calm traffic along Lockwood Drive, creating more of a waterfront boulevard that invites pedestrians to the water's edge. Landscape improvements, in particular, would help to create a more comfortable pedestrian environment and a more aesthetically pleasing environment for drivers.

Improve drainage.

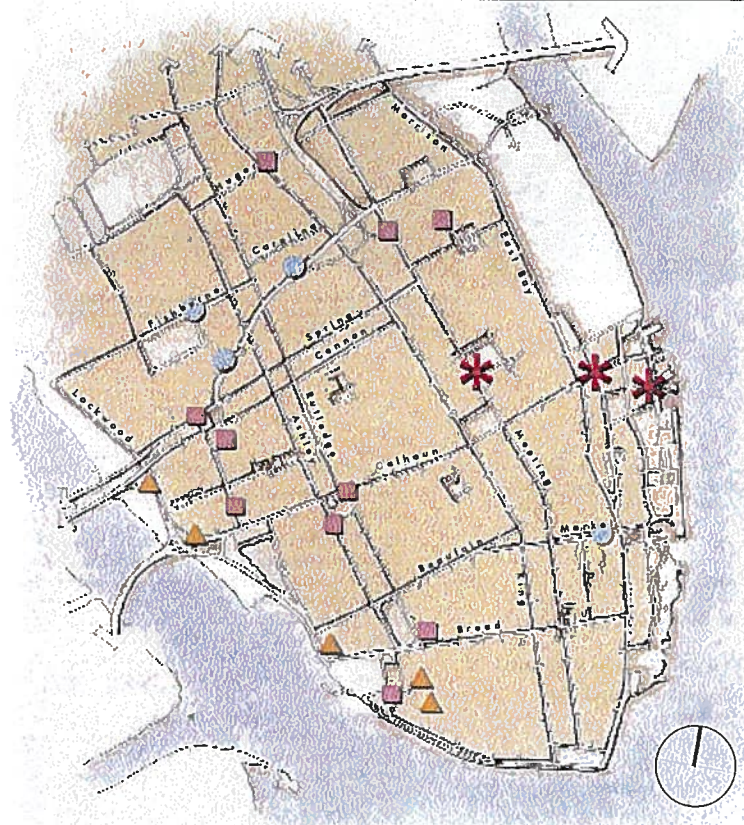
Drainage needs to be improved downtown. Because of downtown's vicinity to sea level and the amount of filled land within the study area, drainage is a challenge. Flooding can occur based on intense rainfall events, extreme high tides or a combination of the two.

The 1984 *Master Drainage and Floodplain Management Plan 1985-2005* identified and prioritized drainage improvements needed for the entire city. Numerous improvements were recommended. Within the entire peninsula, the estimate for the cost of making these improvements was \$76,000 in 1984 dollars.

The city has focused on making these improvements, starting with the highest ranking of the top priority projects. Progress is being made on a number of priority areas. However, the inordinate costs for design, permitting and construction will control the rate at which new projects can be undertaken.

Development decisions should be made with specific consideration to the prevention of flooding damage and the effect of frequent minor nuisance flooding. Consultation with the city regarding the status of these drainage improvements and their relationship on a proposed development is highly recommended. Special design considerations or postponing development may be warranted.

Drainage improvements



Drainage needs to be considered as new developments are proposed.



to be completed in 1999



improvements made



design and improvements needed



design under way

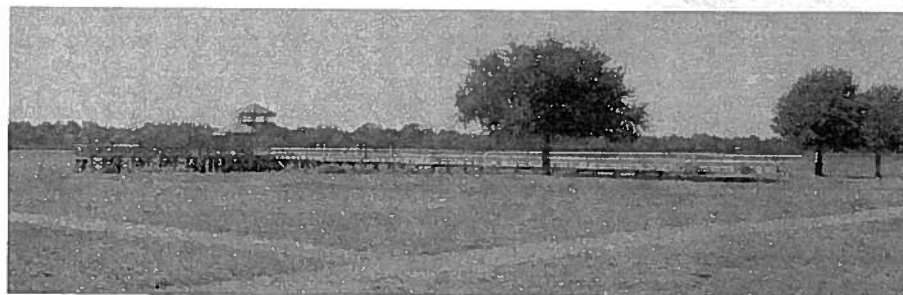
6.5 The public realm: streets, parks, trails and open spaces

Nurtured by generations of civic leaders, residents, merchants and entrepreneurs, downtown Charleston has an outstanding public realm. Narrow streets, intimate courtyards, squares, and exquisite gardens add to downtown's quality of life. Marion Square, White Point Gardens, Colonial Lake, Hampton Park, and Brittlebank Park just north of the Crosstown (Septima Clark Expressway) are extraordinary resources. The magnificent Waterfront Park is the latest addition to downtown's legacy and a catalyst for new development. The following goals and objectives address opportunities related to the public realm:

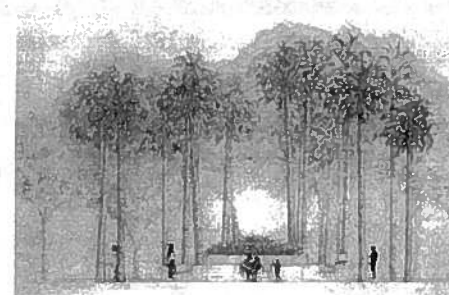
Goal: Enhance the public realm.

Create pedestrian-oriented streets.

Streets are vital elements of the public realm. The quality, intimacy and comfortable walking environment of the streets in the historic city play an important role in positioning downtown as an exceptional place to live and visit. Landscaping,



Brittlebank Park and the other existing open spaces on the peninsula are precious resources.



Reinvestment in Marion Square, which includes this proposed fountain, will help to attract private investment to the Calhoun and Upper King/ Meeting corridors.

high-quality street furniture, lighting, underground wiring, paving, and slow moving traffic all contribute to the atmosphere. Low-rise buildings that abut the right-of-way create an intimate and human-scale environment.

Further north, particularly north of Calhoun, many of the streets do not display the same qualities. With an emphasis on accommodating cars, less intensive landscaping and buildings that are set further back from the street edge, the pedestrian environment lacks much of the charm found in the lower historic city.

To the greatest extent possible, the character and quality of the streets south of Calhoun Street should be extended to the areas north of Calhoun Street that will be repaired and redeveloped in the next wave of investment. Particular emphasis should be given to the main walking and transit routes, especially the corridors: King and Meeting, East Bay, Spring and Cannon, and Calhoun. The planting of street trees throughout the downtown, and particularly north of Calhoun Street, could be a significant contribution to a high-quality walking environment.

Create new open spaces.

There are a number of opportunities for creating new parks and open spaces throughout the downtown, providing active and passive amenities for downtown's residents and visitors. Parks, both new and existing, provide opportunities for incor-

porating public art – creating the opportunity for reflection or a celebration of an intersection. New open space possibilities include those that have been previously proposed, but not yet implemented, as well as those that are newly proposed by the Downtown Plan.

Parks and open spaces previously proposed include:

- Spring Street Pier (contained in the Spring / Cannon Plan)
- Charlotte Street Park (the preliminary plan is complete)
- Aquarium Park at the end of the Calhoun Corridor (currently under construction)
- the play fields along Concord Street in the Upper Concord Street Neighborhood (under construction)
- the expansion of DeReef Park in Radcliffeborough
- Concord Park, Bennett Square, Wharf Place, restoration of the Custom House Wharves, and River Place in the Upper Concord Street Neighborhood (part of the Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan)

New opportunities for park spaces that should be pursued:

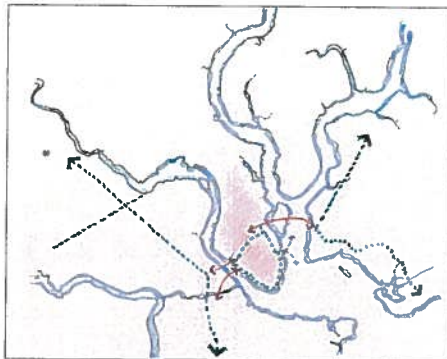
- some of the lands vacated by the relocation of the Cooper River Bridge in the East Side (long-term plans include a pier and boat ramp in the vicinity of the old Cooper River Bridge),

- the open space focus at the west end of Doughty Street,
- two newly configured open spaces in the Spring and Cannon Corridor,
- the marshlands east of Morrison Drive above the existing Cooper River Bridge and west of Lockwood Drive below the City Marina. Given that these marshes are protected by the State, the greatest opportunities lie in the creation of boardwalks, overlooks, and interpretive centers. In order to access the marshes east of Morrison Drive, a means to cross the rail line accessing the Columbus Terminal needs to be developed,
- the extension of Brittlebank Park south to Spring Street along the Ashley River waterfront. (Vested rights on some of this property may result in development occurring, potentially residential. This would be appropriate. However, any development in this area must be in accordance with this Downtown Plan and should, in particular, allow for public access to the waterfront, connect to Brittlebank Park and create a strong edge along Lockwood Boulevard.)

Improve existing open spaces.

Many squares and parks throughout downtown should be given renewed importance and enhanced roles. Located along the prominent King and Meeting Street spine, Marion Square is one of the premier open spaces on the

Trails on the peninsula need to be connected to a regional network.



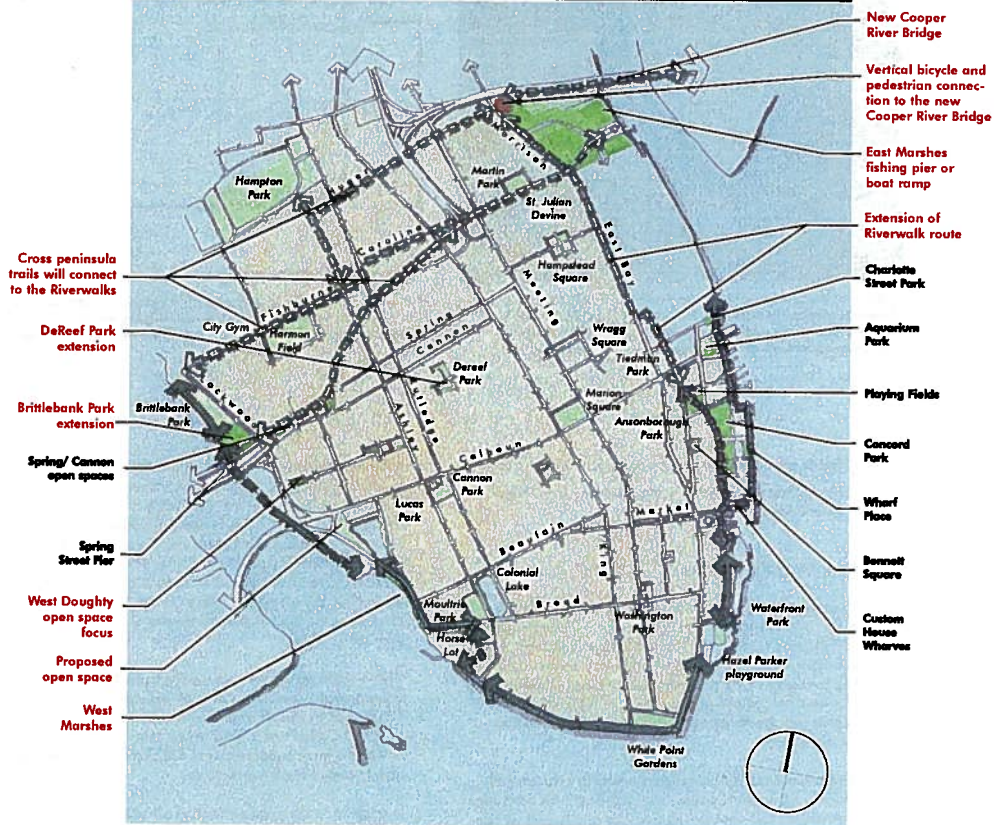
peninsula. A master plan for the park, prepared by Michael VanValkenburgh and now being implemented through tax increment financing, will take maximum advantage of this important civic space, while providing a focal point for public activities. Sites around the edges of this park will soon be among the most desirable in downtown.

Another important opportunity exists in the East Side Neighborhood at Hampstead Square. A magnificent park focal point could be created here for the East Side Neighborhood. DeReef Park, which currently feels unsafe and is therefore underutilized, could be enhanced through landscaping, lighting, improved maintenance, and being better knitted into the city to make users feel more safe.

Neighborhood parks that should be improved include:

- DeReef Park in Radcliffeborough,
- Colonial Lake and Moultrie Park in Harleston Village. (improvements to Moultrie Park are planned to be completed soon),
- White Point Gardens and the Horse Lot in Charlestowne (improvements are currently planned for the Horse Lot),
- Tiedeman Park and Wragg Square in Mazyck-Wraggborough,
- Hampstead Square,
- Harmon Field and Brittlebank Park in the West Side

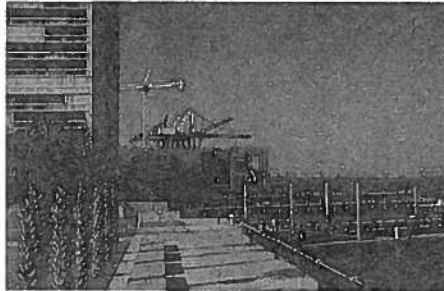
Existing and proposed major open spaces



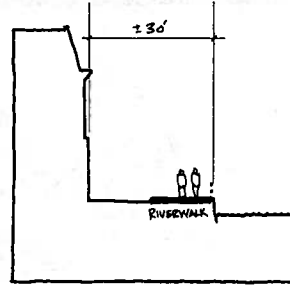
- Existing waterfront trails.
- Previously proposed waterfront trails.
- Newly proposed waterfront trails.

Major open spaces:

- Red text indicates newly proposed open space
- Bold black text indicates previously proposed open space
- Light black text indicates existing open space and streets



Portions of the waterfront trail/riverwalk are being created in the Upper Concord neighborhood. Every effort should be made to ensure it is a continuous public edge that can accommodate recreation opportunities for both residents and visitors.



To create the riverwalk, a 30 foot right-of-way along the water's edge should be reserved. This will ensure adequate space for planting, vendors, seating and privacy within adjacent buildings.

- (plans are currently being prepared for Harmon Field),
- Martin Park immediately north of the existing Cooper River Bridge.

Continue the waterfront trail.

The waterfront trail plays a large role in linking downtown together and providing access to the water. The emerging waterfront trail is utilized by joggers and walkers from early in the morning to late at night. Currently, it runs down East Bay, along the water at the south end, and along Lockwood Drive in the west. As outlined in Charleston 2000, the trail should be continued directly along the Cooper River and Ashley River waterfronts.

The waterfront trail should reflect the distinct character of each river. Along the Cooper River waterfront, the hard edge of the existing port uses are appropriate and should be continued. Along the softer edge of the Ashley River waterfront, a nature trail / wetland boardwalk would be more appropriate. Recent and future trail improvements along the Ashley River are currently being funded by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the city and county.

All efforts should be made to develop a 30 foot wide right-of-way to accommodate the trail as it follows the lower peninsula perimeter. Although in many places this cannot be accommodated, it should be maintained as a goal and

achieved wherever possible. A wider right-of-way will allow for seating, vendors, public art, monuments and other elements that will enhance the experience of the trail.

A wider right-of-way will also allow opportunities to create space for bicycles and roller-blades. Currently, the city ordinance prohibits bicycles and roller-blades on sidewalks. However, given the desire to reduce the number of people driving into the downtown, every opportunity should be taken to increase the use of alternate modes of transportation, such as cycling.

With a wider right-of-way the option exists to incorporate two separate trails, one that is used by pedestrians and the other that is used by cyclists and roller-bladers. A wider, single trail could be divided and shared. As an important recreational amenity, a more substantial trail will also help to divert visitor activity away from the downtown.

In addition to the route outlined in Charleston 2000 the trail should follow the path of the Crosstown, or other appropriate routes in this vicinity, connecting the Ashley and Cooper River waterfronts to create a continuous recreational loop. The waterfront trail should also link up with regional trails. Creating a connected loop will enhance the trail's role as a recreational amenity and as a reliable and comfortable means of commuting.

7. Directing development: The land use strategy

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 discussed the potential for new development in all economic sectors. Chapter 6 identified opportunities for reinforcing the urban structure. Now it remains to join economic development with urban structure to develop a land use strategy. Where exactly should targeted development be accommodated? How much development should be encouraged? How can opportunities for developing and reinforcing the urban structures be translated into a land use strategy? How should the city target specific new uses?

7.2 Where can growth be accommodated?

Within the broad urban structure, downtown Charleston currently has areas that are *stable*, in *transition*, and *suitable for larger scale redevelopment*. The stable areas are mostly comprised of residential neighborhoods, treasured communities that should remain largely as they are in form and use. Little change or growth is anticipated or proposed in this area.

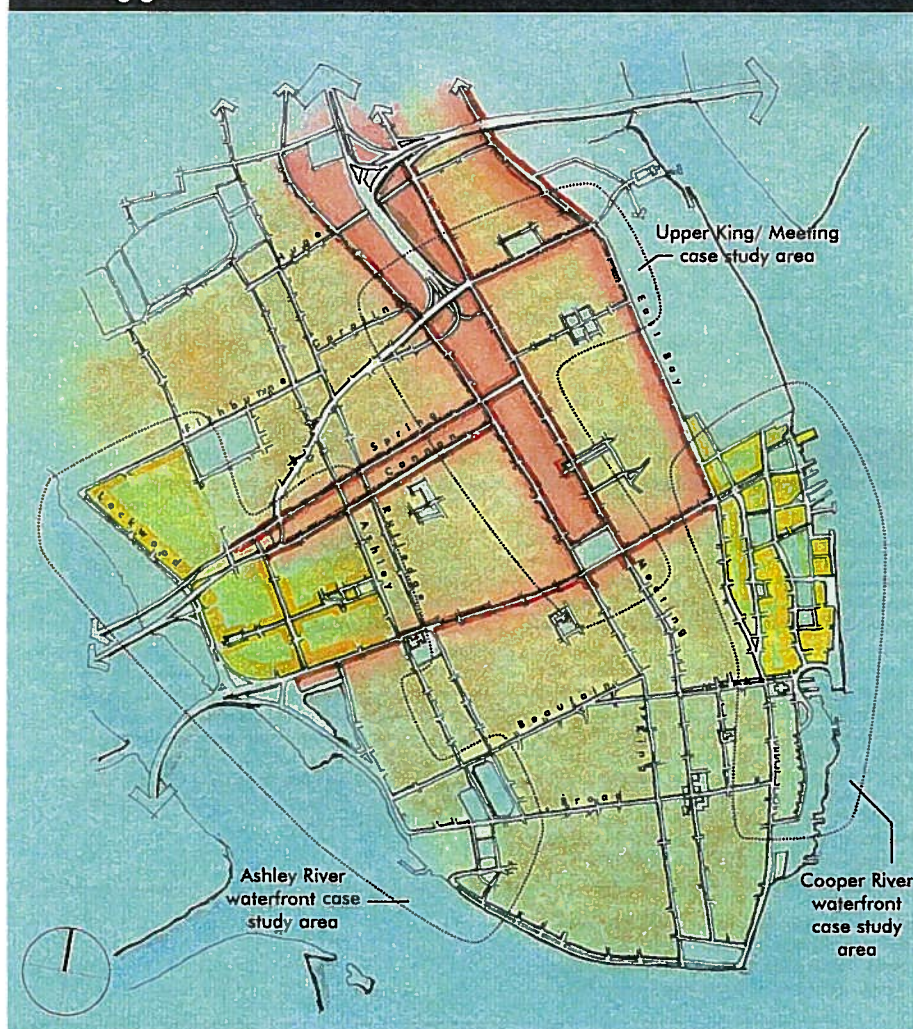
With the exception of the Union Pier area, *transitional areas* and *redevelopment areas* are generally found north of Calhoun Street and are anticipated to absorb virtually all of the growth. The *transitional areas* contain gaps in the urban fabric, either where demolition has occurred or where a site is underutilized. These gaps provide opportunities for new development. In these places, the network of streets and blocks remain intact and it is a matter of allowing new developments to be sensitively inserted onto the available parcels to reinforce the existing character.

The *transitional areas* generally include the traditional retail and residential corridors in downtown: Upper King and Meeting Street; Spring and Cannon Street; Calhoun Street; East Bay Street, and the site of the existing Cooper River

Bridge, soon to be relocated. Some of these corridors – such as Spring Street, Cannon Street, and Calhoun Street – have already been targeted for new development, others – such as the Upper King and Meeting Corridor – have been the subject of ongoing revitalization efforts. Still others, such as the Cooper River Bridge and Morrison Drive have only recently emerged as potential available sites for revitalization.

In the *redevelopment areas*, large tracts of vacant land are available for comprehensive redevelopment. In these areas, it is a question of integrating new development within the overall urban structure, through the establishment of a network of streets and blocks and appropriate built form. There are two major redevelopment areas: the Cooper River waterfront, including the Union Pier area; and the Crosstown Gateway including the medical complex. The acreage available in these areas can accommodate significant reinvestment and growth.

Directing growth



Stable area

Transition area

Redevelopment area

Most growth will occur in the transition and redevelopment areas. The corridors, in particular, can accommodate development without impacting the neighborhoods.

Chapter 9 presents a detailed discussion of the case study areas: The Cooper River waterfront, the Upper King / Meeting Corridor, and the Ashley River waterfront.

7.3 The Land Use Strategy

The development targets and urban structural analysis provide a framework upon which to build a land use strategy. The strategy is flexible, allowing for an appropriate mix of land uses that can evolve within established parameters, while guiding Charleston's evolution over the time frame of this Plan and beyond.

The land use strategy implements and supports the existing and recommended urban structure – it identifies and preserves *low intensity neighborhoods* and identifies the range and intensity of land uses to be accommodated in the *transitional* and *redevelopment* areas. It provides for the extension of residential neighborhood fabric to the Cooper River waterfront and the establishment of multi-purpose corridors and focal points linked together through an enhanced public realm.

The land use strategy is based upon the following broad directions that aim to further the Downtown Plan's social, economic and physical objectives:

Distribution of growth in transitional and redevelopment areas (sq.ft.) 1999 - 2019

	Hotel	Retail	Office	Residential
<i>Upper King / Meeting</i>	540,000	200,000	150,000	400,000
<i>Crosstown Gateway</i>	180,000	100,000	400,000	200,000
<i>Cooper River</i>	200,000	200,000	600,000	715,000
<i>Corridors: Spring / Cannon, Calhoun</i>		63,200	200,000	368,800
<i>Lower Lockwood</i>				100,000
Total	920,000	563,200	1,350,000	1,783,800

Distribute housing throughout the lower peninsula

Housing should be accorded priority in development, particularly in the Union Pier area and along the various corridors, where higher intensity townhouse or apartment forms can be sensitively inserted, broadening the range of housing types available in the study area. Infill development in existing stable residential neighborhoods must be sensitive to the existing city fabric.

Locate office uses in close proximity to related uses, including other offices

Office uses should cluster, creating a synergistic, mixed-use environment. Particular emphasis is placed on the Crosstown Gateway as an opportunity for high-tech uses or related office uses in proximity to the medical complex.

Other appropriate locations for office development include: Upper King and Meeting Streets, and Calhoun Street between the new aquarium on the east and the medical center on the west.

Similarly, the Union Pier Terminal area can also accommodate new, flexible office layouts. As discussed in Chapter 9,

transportation constraints suggest that there should be more residential space and less commercial office and retail space than currently planned in Union Pier.

Broad Street and the Market area are appropriate for small office uses, specifically business people requiring smaller amounts of space that can function effectively in older buildings.

Add new retail along the corridors

Retail uses should be directed to the corridors - the traditional location for shopping in downtown Charleston. In particular, King Street is the shopping "center" for downtown residents and visitors. However, additional retail uses should be directed toward the Upper King and Meeting Corridor.

In the redevelopment areas, retail should also be permitted to provide a full diversity of uses. For example, East Bay Street is envisioned in the Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan as an appropriate location for neighborhood retail uses. Retail uses should not be of a magnitude to detract from the primacy of the King/Meeting corridor. A small amount of retail development is proposed as infill to serve new neighborhoods, especially in the historic neighborhood corner stores.

As mentioned above, in view of transportation constraints, the commercial office and retail emphasis in the Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan should be reduced to ensure capacity for higher priority residential development.

Direct hotels generally north of Calhoun Street

Building on the *Visitor Accommodation Study*, the Downtown Plan's strategy is to encourage hotels away from the heart of downtown to locations where they might act as catalysts to revitalization. The strategy also aims to keep hotels away from the waterfront in order to maintain and enhance meaningful public water access.

New hotels, totalling a maximum of 800 rooms over the next twenty years, are proposed to be concentrated north of Calhoun Street in the transitional and redevelopment areas: Upper King and Meeting Street and the Crosstown Gateway. Hotels are also proposed in the focal points along the eastern edge of downtown, one in Union Pier as recommended in the *Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan* and one fronting onto Calhoun Street.

The Downtown Plan endorses the *Visitor Accommodation Study*. However, it recommends some minor amendments to the Accommodation Zone to take maximum advantage of key opportunities. These modifications maintain the

Proposed changes to the visitor accommodation study



The Downtown Plan endorses the Visitor Accommodation Study. However, it recommends some minor amendments to the accommodation zone to take maximum advantage of key opportunities.

-  Existing visitor accommodation zone
-  Proposed extension of visitor accommodation zone
-  Proposed removal from visitor accommodation zone

Accommodation Study's spirit and integrity but seek to capitalize on recommended transit improvements and support the city's urban structure.

Three general areas are recommended for inclusion. The Upper King and Meeting Corridor contains large tracts of underutilized lands that will have increased prominence with the relocation of the Crosstown. The proximity of this area to the commuter rail line proposed to link downtown with the conference center and Summerville strongly supports proposed transit recommendations and will help to reduce the number of visitors driving into downtown.

The lands on the east side of a portion of Meeting Street, lying north of Charlotte Street, were recommended to be removed from the Accommodation Zone by the Visitor Accommodation Study. The Downtown Plan recommends that these lands be reconsidered for hotels, given their proximity to transit and the intensification recommended along the King and Meeting Corridor. However, since these sites back onto residential neighborhoods, permission for hotels should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis after giving thorough consideration to the criteria outlined in the zoning ordinance.

Other areas that should be included in the Accommodation Zone are the focal points along the Cooper River water-

front. The Calhoun Corridor is emerging as a mixed-use area with an emphasis on cultural attractions and facilities. The Calhoun Corridor is also a major east-west spine and is appropriate for transit. One hotel along this corridor of approximately 100 rooms would be appropriate and would help to reduce the number of cars impacting this area.

A hotel of approximately 200 rooms was proposed and approved as part of Phase 1 of the Union Pier Plan at the terminus of Market Street. This area was excluded from the Accommodations Study in order to receive further study as part of the Downtown Plan. According to the *Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan*, Market Street will be extended east to the waterfront where the Customs House Wharves will be renovated, forming a focal point and place of intense public activity along the waterfront. The Downtown Plan therefore recommends that this area be included within the Visitor Accommodation Zone for one hotel, adding to the diversity of uses.

The Ashley River waterfront north of the Crosstown is appropriate for hotels as identified in the *Visitor Accommodation Study*. The Downtown Plan proposes to expand the area north where large tracts of vacant land are far removed from residential neighborhoods. As well, the Downtown Plan identifies this portion of the Ashley River waterfront as a focal point, given its proximity to the future

restoration of the Spring Street Pier that will concentrate public activity along the water's edge. It is also a gateway area to the peninsula and is easily accessible from the Crosstown. A hotel in this area should not be directly along the water's edge.

To further the Downtown Plan's goal of naturalizing the Ashley River waterfront to the greatest extent possible, a hotel on the City Marina site is not recommended for inclusion in the zone at this time.

7.4 The Land Use Plan

The land use plan provides further direction for accommodating growth by creating two major land use categories: **low intensity neighborhood**; and **mixed-use areas**. Subcategories (low, medium and high density) provide further direction.

Low intensity neighborhoods cover large parts of downtown and little change is anticipated. The mixed-use designation is applied to the corridors (the *transitional areas*) and the *redevelopment areas* that are recommended to accommodate a broad range of land uses. Focal points occur at important crossroads where particular consideration to urban design or architectural elements create landmarks.

The land use strategy is intended to be highly transit-supportive by placing greater amounts of employment (workers), tourism (visitors) and housing (residents) within proximity to existing and potential transit corridors. To support this goal, a diversity of land uses are proposed within nodes and corridors at greater intensities than the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

- Stable industrial
- Low-intensity neighborhood
- High-intensity, mixed-use
- Medium-intensity, mixed-use
- Major open space
- Institutional boundaries

The land use plan disperses tourism related activities to appropriate areas, generally north of Calhoun Street. The intent is reduce the density of visitors south of Calhoun Street and spread the associated economic benefits throughout the lower peninsula.

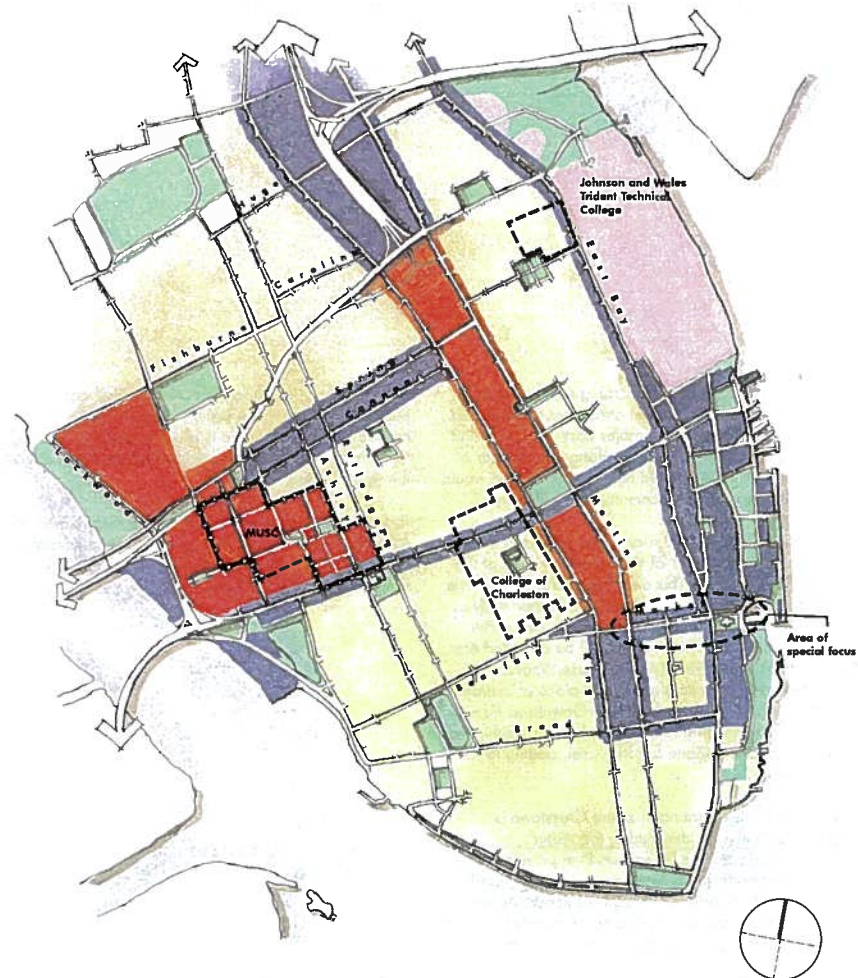
The creation of land use categories and associated policy directions provides the framework for future land use decisions in the downtown and facilitates achievement of the Plan's underlying principles and vision.

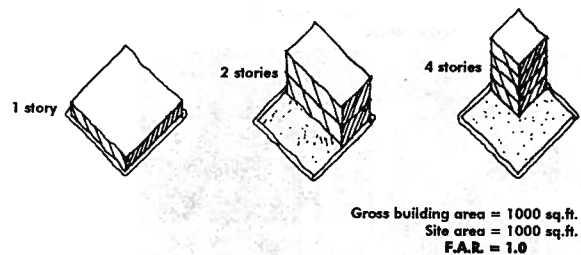
Goal: Create a supporting land use strategy

Designate neighborhoods as "low intensity neighborhood."

Neighborhoods, primarily residential, are to be low intensity. These areas should have a predominance of house form structures whose ongoing restoration is encouraged. Although these neighborhoods are not anticipated to undergo significant change, infill development that is sensitive to the existing character is required. Neighborhoods should also include a mix of compatible uses such as parks, recreation facilities, schools, places of worship, libraries, community centers, and compatible small-scale commercial uses. The intent is to allow residents to meet day-to-day needs

Proposed land use





Floor area ratio (FAR)

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a way of describing density. Using this method, the total development permitted is established based on the area of the lot. For example, development might be permitted up to three times the area of the lot, an FAR of 3. Accordingly, if a lot were 2 acres in size (87,125 square feet), total development permitted would be approximately 261,377 square feet (3 x 87,125).

The advantage to this approach is that it focuses attention on the issues that are most important- the height, the density and the building envelope- rather than the number of units which can be built per acre. It facilitates the creation of smaller units, which can fit within the same envelope as a fewer number of large units.

within easy walking distance of their homes, while preserving an important historic neighborhood character.

Restrict expansion of institutions within low intensity neighborhoods.

Several major institutions are situated within or adjacent to stable residential neighborhoods: the MUSC, the College of Charleston, Trident Technical College, and Johnson and Wales. Defined boundaries should be adhered to in order to prevent encroachment into the neighborhoods.

The College of Charleston is interwoven with the surrounding neighborhood. Adhering to boundaries and the permitted uses within them, will help to alleviate tensions that tend to arise with site specific expansions. In the heart of the campus, the full range of college-related uses should be permitted. However, where the College meets neighborhoods, more careful consideration of permitted uses is needed to ensure compatibility and reduce conflict. For example, the College owns structures along the west side of Coming Street. These structures are appropriate for housing and administrative uses but should not be used for more fraternities or sororities.

Although the boundaries of the MUSC are more clear, they must be enforced and the transition to adjacent neighborhoods made more smoothly. New development associated with the MUSC should aim to create a transition in scale with low-rise adjacent neighborhoods.

The Trident Technical College should remain within its existing boundaries, the block bounded by Columbus, Drake, Blake and America Streets so as not to further impact the East Side neighborhood.

The Johnson and Wales campus is one which may undergo change should the school relocate. Given that this school is situated within one building, boundaries are not as pressing an issue, with the exception of parking. Parking should not be permitted to encroach into the surrounding neighborhood.

Designate the corridors and redevelopment areas as mixed-use.

Most of the corridors and redevelopment areas in downtown are designated mixed-use. They are intended to accommodate shopping, business and professional services, as well as high-density housing.

Distinction is made between low, medium and high density areas. High intensity is envisioned as accommodating densities in the range of 3.0-3.5 FAR; medium, 2.5-3.0 FAR; and low, 1.5-2.5 FAR. Generally, this intensification is proposed to occur *without any increases in height* through more efficient use of each lot. The recommendations are intended to provide broad direction for subsequent implementation through zoning ordinance review.

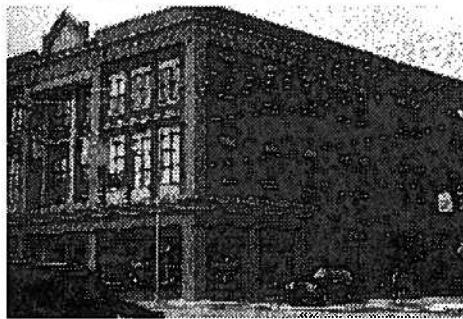
Assign high-intensity, mixed-use to the Upper King / Meeting Corridor and the Crosstown Gateway

A mix of residential, commercial, hotel and entertainment uses should be incorporated along the King / Meeting Corridor, and the Crosstown Gateway.

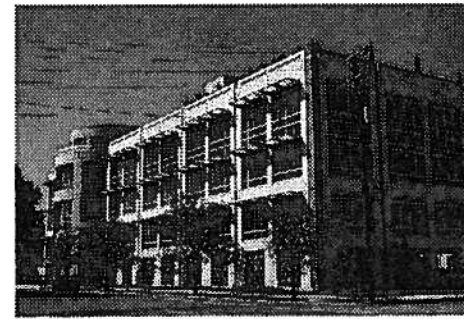
The King and Meeting Corridor, incorporating a mix of uses, functions as the premier downtown shopping district, a role that the Plan confirms and reinforces. A full range of uses is anticipated: additional retail, hotel, office, entertainment, cultural, and residential development. Retail use should be required, or at minimum strongly encouraged, at grade level - particularly since transit services are proposed to be enhanced along this corridor, via frequency of stops, reliability and marketing. Higher density is recommended to derive maximum benefit, particularly along the upper King and Meeting Corridor.

The Crosstown Gateway is recommended for commercial emphasis, as a potential location for modern office, medical and hotel development. Retail uses that are ancillary to the office and hotel development are also envisioned. Residential uses are permitted but anticipated as secondary for the foreseeable future. The Crosstown Gateway is designated the highest intensity in the downtown, reflecting its distance from the historic city, the large sites available, and the proximity to the Crosstown Expressway.

Charleston contains a wealth of buildings that could serve as prototypes for new development.



Warren Place is a good example of appropriate infill in the Upper King/ Meeting corridor.



This urban office building would be appropriate on Upper Lockwood.

Assign medium-intensity, mixed-use to the Cooper River waterfront, the Cooper River Bridge area, Cannon Street, Spring Street, Calhoun Street, Lower King and Meeting Streets, Lower East Bay.

The intent is to develop a mix of uses along the Cooper River Waterfront and the secondary corridors at medium intensity.

Along the Cooper River waterfront, the intent is to complement proposed office, institutional, entertainment, and hotel activities. Development should reflect the quality and character of existing neighborhoods at medium intensity. The Union Pier Terminal Concept Plan should include more housing than is currently proposed, while still providing opportunities for commercial uses.

Cannon Street and the existing Cooper River Bridge area are intended to facilitate low and mid-rise permanent residential development that is appropriate for a corridor and harmonizes with adjacent residential neighborhoods. Hotels should not be permitted in these areas.

Both Calhoun and Spring Streets should have greater commercial emphasis and are excellent venues for a wide variety of professional offices, smaller scale institutions, retail, entertainment or cultural uses. In general, hotels should not be permitted. Retail uses should be encouraged at-grade in new development. Residential development is also encouraged.

Development along Lower King and Meeting Streets and Lower East Bay should complement the existing uses along these corridors and in the Market area. Residential development should be encouraged. Compatibility with adjacent residential areas is important when considering any change of use.

The Market Area is delineated as an *Area of Special Focus* in order to recognize the impacts suffered by residents in this area due to burgeoning visitor-related commercial uses. In order to restore balance, the city should give as much priority as possible to non-commercial, non-tourism related new development in this area. A streamlined approval process or positive consideration of ordinance variances would help to achieve this goal. A strategy of dispersal of tourism-related activities throughout the downtown area should, over time, dissipate the impacts currently experienced, such as pedestrian and vehicular congestion.

Create focal points.

Focal points should be created at each crossroad in the downtown to create a series of landmark locations. Nodes should be defined by a public space or presence: a park, square, pier, civic or community use, cultural facilities, or water taxi depot. They could also be defined through architectural detail, public art, or a variation in height. Particular consideration to urban design or architectural elements should strengthen these areas as "landmarks".

8. Built form



Both new and old architecture display the same qualities in terms of massing and form. This has, in part, given the city its cohesive, harmonious character.

8.1 Introduction

For centuries, development in historic downtown Charleston blended seamlessly, creating a coherent, compact city fabric that today embraces many neighborhoods, retail corridors and a vibrant market area. It is this city fabric that now underlies downtown's unique atmosphere and desirability. The city's character can be reinforced by ensuring the integrity of each new building.

Buildings that fit into the historic city fabric have a number of specific characteristics. While there are exceptions, structures are relatively small in scale. Heights are relatively low. Residential buildings are typically 2 – 3 stories while commercial buildings are typically 3 – 5 stories. Active uses such as living, retail or office space are located at grade level or just above. Buildings have minimal setbacks. Parking is generally incorporated on the street or in small driveways. In short, the city is comprised of buildings that occupy much of the lot, frame the streets and parks, and that are at a relatively consistent, low height. The effect is an intimate, pedestrian scale and unique environment.

Recently, issues have arisen that significantly impact the design and feel of new development. Market forces and flood plain regulations create pressures for large scale

structures and greater height. Flood plain regulations generally restrict active uses from being located at street level in certain areas. On-site parking requirements, in combination with flood plain regulations, invite inhospitable parking solutions. As well, the full extent of the excellent heritage preservation efforts in downtown are yet to be applied north of Line Street, an area that will soon be under pressure to develop.

Each of these issues needs to be addressed to ensure architectural integrity and to ensure that new developments blend with the historic city.

8.2 Architectural integrity

Charleston's lower peninsula is renowned for architectural quality - both old and new. South of Calhoun Street, new development is often blended with the old with great success. North of Calhoun Street, where existing city fabric is weakened through demolition and surface parking lots, the context provides fewer guidelines, and continuity is harder to achieve.

The lower peninsula is a prestigious destination for visitors and highly sought-after by potential residents. The city should continue to negotiate high quality design. Economic imperative should not be used as a rationale for building less than the highest quality. In particular, the city and community need to ensure quality development above Calhoun Street.

Developing in downtown is a privilege that comes with high expectations and responsibilities that should be clearly understood and articulated. Development should respond to its context and be considerate of the historic core. It does not have to duplicate historic styles. Creative architectural solutions that fit within Charleston's historic character should build on existing typologies and reflect the period during which they were designed.

The grain and scale of city streets, open spaces, blocks, lots sizes, buildings and the pattern of use reveals an intimate, human scale.



Almost every kind of use can be found in the French Quarter neighborhood. Sometimes all on one block, as reflected in this 1998 land-use map.



Longitude Lane is one of Charleston's narrowest streets, and amongst the city's most charming.



Buildings are at a human scale. In other words, they seem to embrace the pedestrian without overwhelming them.

Goal: Ensure architectural quality

Hold design competitions for important civic buildings.

Public buildings should be exemplary and warrant a design competition to ensure highest quality and greatest creativity.

Design buildings to frame the public realm.

Part of what makes a high-quality building is the manner in which it contributes to its surrounding context. Following a longstanding tradition in downtown Charleston, buildings should frame the public realm - streets, parks and open spaces. Entrances should be sited to open onto the street, reinforcing the vitality and primacy of the street. Each street in Charleston has a different character and buildings should define the public space of a street in a way that is consistent with its character.

Submit each development proposal to the city with context drawings.

Part of the design review process for new development should include an analysis of the surrounding context, including: local topographic features, significant trees and vegetation, existing and proposed built context, the relationship to major pedestrian and vehicular routes, the relationship to open spaces and parks, and the relationship to any area plans. This type of analysis will help to ensure that the buildings fit within the natural and built context and that vehicular and pedestrian flow to and from the building is well-handled. This analysis will also ensure that new structures appropriately frame the public realm.

8.3 Grain and scale of development

The old city is characterized by fine grain and generally small-scale development. Buildings, the mix of uses, open spaces - parks, courtyards and gardens - are all finely interwoven, creating a richly textured city fabric. To the greatest extent possible, the grain should be preserved and reflected in newly emerging areas.

New development, subject to today's economic reality, often needs to be constructed at a larger scale, whether it be more height or a larger building footprint. However, it is difficult to integrate large-scale development within downtown while retaining the city's unique sense of place.

As much as possible, Charleston needs to seek out the unique, specialty operators that will build at a smaller scale, catering specifically to the downtown as a distinct location. Hotels, for example, can be built at a smaller scale, as can residential buildings.

There are cases where this type of development is not practical or desirable. Downtown needs to accommodate new commercial space to ensure a greater number and diversity



The Customs House is an example of an outstanding building with a special urban function. It marks the historic port entrance to the market and the city.



These houses on the other hand are good context buildings. They create an attractive and coherent street edge, but no one building is over emphasized.

Urban Grain is the pattern of the arrangement and size of buildings and their plots in a settlement; and the degree to which an area's pattern of street-blocks and street junctions is respectively small and frequent, or large and infrequent.

In Charleston there exists a very fine urban grain, which should be maintained and extended to the redevelopment areas.

of employment opportunities. With the option to locate in competing suburban locations, potential commercial tenants demand larger, more efficient floorplates. Commercial uses also tend to congregate and encourage synergies.

Where these larger elements - commercial or residential - are incorporated into the downtown, they need to conform to urban rules. Strategies need to be employed to integrate large commercial structures into the city fabric without resorting to a business park format that would represent a significant departure from Charleston's existing character.

Goal: Build in keeping with the downtown grain and scale

Ensure a diversity of architectural expression.

In areas where there is significant redevelopment or new development, there should be a diversity of architectural expression within each street or block. The addition of new commercial space to downtown or the planned expansion of the MUSC are both examples where there is opportunity to ensure diversity and creativity as large amounts of new development are added. Buildings should not be strictly historic in style but should reflect their context, purpose and the time during which they were designed.

Ensure a diversity of building types.

Buildings can and should play a diversity of roles. Within the overall city fabric, some buildings should be background buildings - structures that will create an attractive and coherent street edge but that do not stand out as extraordinary.

Some buildings have a special role within a block or street and should stand out more - they could mark an open space, a special corner or they might be on axis with an important or attractive view corridor.

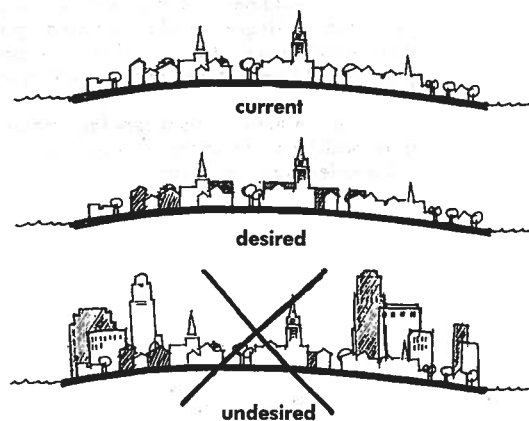
There is also room for buildings that are truly outstanding objects. Places of worship, public structures, certain locations adjacent to the waterfront or important parks all warrant exceptional treatment and design. Downtown Charleston should contain all of these types of buildings.

In large development areas, a diversity of design talent should be encouraged.

Employing different architects and designers will assist in ensuring diversity. The Union Pier proposal or the MUSC expansion are important opportunities to retain top architects. In dividing the lands into developable parcels, there is an opportunity to create some outstanding structures that are attractive and inviting additions to the city's built form.

Ensure the vitality of grade level.

The treatment of the grade level, through the incorporation of active uses or the addition of windows and entrances, can create the perception of vitality and of a small-scale and finer mix. Multiple dwelling units should be designed so that each unit has a separate porch or stoop. Single entry buildings should clearly address the street with generous canopies, awnings and open lobbies. All ground floor uses should address the street with generous fenestration and multiple entries. Art should be incorporated into the finishes of buildings, including the downspouts, signage, grillwork, and tile work.



New development should be in keeping with the City's current skyline. The downtown plan recommends that the height regime be modified to clearly reflect the desired development.

8.4 Height

Charleston's skyline is characterized by lower buildings along the water edges with higher built spines along King, Meeting and Calhoun Streets. Towers and spires punctuate the horizon, signaling important buildings, the termination of vistas and accentuating subtle shifts in the street pattern. This overall height envelope is supported by the existing height regime - greater restrictions apply along the edges of downtown and higher heights are permitted along the central spines - and should be preserved.

Generally, Charleston has accommodated growth without increasing height: horizontal rather than vertical intensification. There are plenty of medium density buildings in Charleston that preserve a low profile on the horizon: the new Gateway Center and School District building, the Nation's Bank Building (soon to be Bank of America) and 134 Meeting Street are a few examples. Notwithstanding, much new development in Charleston comes with pressures to increase height, particularly along the waterfront. The few tall buildings that dot the city's skyline have been a contentious source of discussion.

The Downtown Plan identifies ample room to accommodate new development in a more intense form that is in

keeping with the scale and character of the existing context. To take advantage of these opportunities, the Downtown Plan recommends that the height regime be modified to more clearly reflect the desired development.

Heights in the downtown are currently defined by ten different height categories:

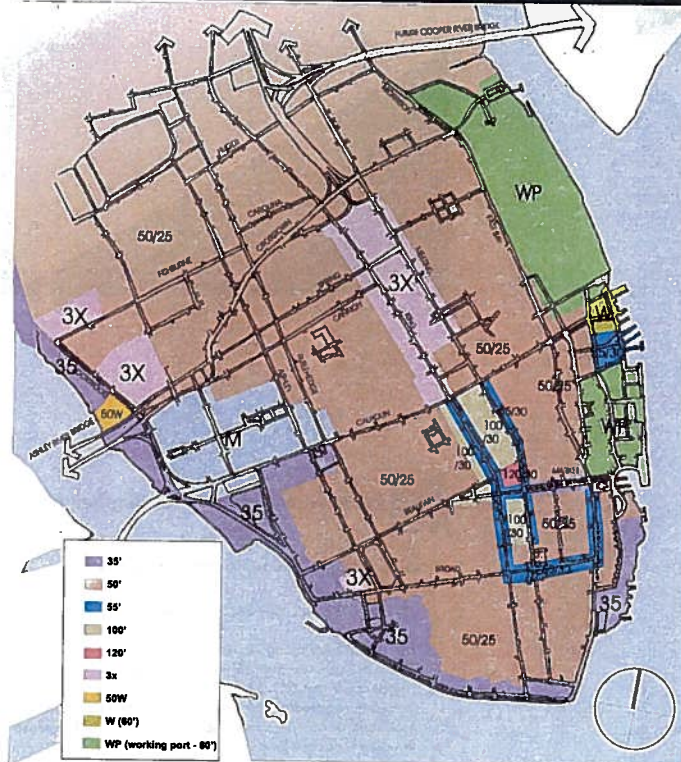
- 35:** 35' maximum.
- 50/25:** 50' maximum, 25' minimum
- 55/30:** 55' maximum height, 30-foot minimum
- 100/30:** 100' maximum height, 30-foot minimum
- 120/30:** 120' maximum height, 30-foot minimum
- 50W:** 50' maximum, 25' setback from high water mark.
- M:** Maximum height determined by setbacks from street. The 25-foot minimum building setback is out of character with Charleston's tight street frontages.
- W:** Maximum height equal to building setback from street. A building setback by 100 could be 100 feet high.
- WP:** 60-foot maximum height, except when closer than 50' from a building rated in the Historic Architecture Inventory as group 1 or 2.
- 3X:** Maximum height to be three times the dimension from the center of the street right-of-way to the

face of the building face, 30-foot minimum height. A building in the 3X zone on Meeting Street (66' wide) could theoretically be 99' high. If it was built set back from the right of way it could be even higher.

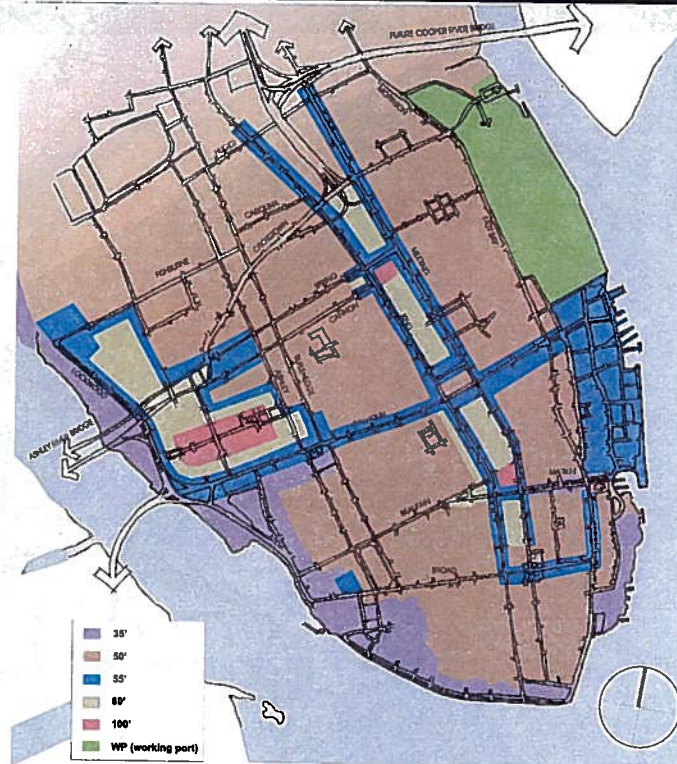
Some of these categories respect existing building heights and should be retained. Others are redundant due to changes in land uses. In those areas where the height limits are based on the lot size or setback (the 3X and W zone), the heights are potentially too high to be compatible with the existing city fabric and may be inappropriate. To reinforce the skyline, the overly permissive categories in the height regime should be replaced with a more directed and site sensitive approach. The Downtown Plan also proposes to simplify and consolidate the large number of zones.

The result of these modifications is that heights in the King/Meeting Corridors and the hospital complex area will become more restricted with graduated transitions in scale to the surrounding neighborhoods. Heights in the Union Pier area will be adjusted to fit with heights of adjacent waterfront neighborhoods. Parts of Spring, Cannon and Calhoun Streets will benefit from an increase in height, generally enough to encourage office or retail developments on the ground floor. Another result is to focus the potential of additional height in areas that are served by transit.

Existing heights



Proposed heights

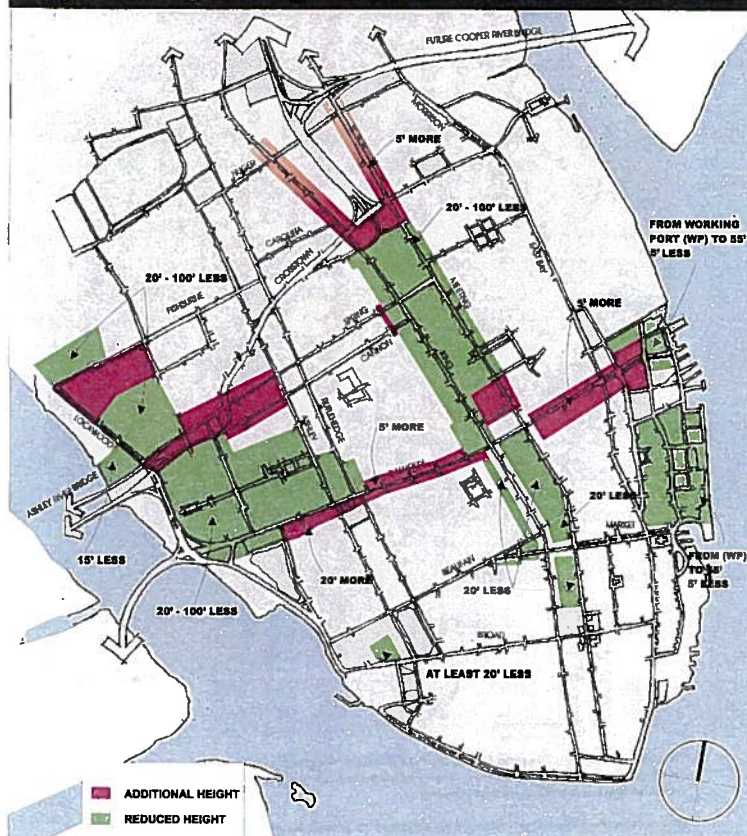


Heights in the King/Meeting Corridors and the hospital complex area will become more restricted with graduated transitions in scale to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Heights in the Union Pier area will be adjusted to fit with heights of adjacent waterfront neighborhoods.

Parts of Spring, Cannon and Calhoun Streets will benefit from an increase in height, generally one story.

Proposed changes in height



Height limits in most of the lower peninsula are maintained or reduced. Heights limits along the Calhoun and Spring / Cannon Corridors are increased slightly.



Charleston's existing skyline should be preserved.

Goal: Preserve downtown's existing height

Simplify and consolidate the height categories.

The plan proposes six categories as follows:

35' height zone along the downtown water's edge. This zone is similar to the existing 35' zone, establishing a maximum height of 35 feet (2 1/2 stories) with a provision to add the extra feet required by FEMA flood plain regulations to a maximum of 45'. In most cases, this provision will increase the allowed height by only a few feet.

50' / 30' zone over the interior downtown neighborhoods. This zone establishes a maximum height of 50 feet (four to five stories) and a minimum of 30 feet along the street frontage.

55' / 30' zone along key corridors, establishes a maximum height of 55 feet (five to six stories) and a minimum of 30 feet along the street frontage. This existing height category is extended along key corridors north of Calhoun St. as well as in the Union Pier area. It would be helpful to increase the 55' height to 60' in order to encourage a variety of roof forms - the fifth building facade.



Lobbies and other active uses should fill as much of the ground floor as possible. Parking and its impact on the street should be minimized.



New buildings, respecting FEMA regulations, should be designed to be as contextual as possible. In the example to the right (middle house), building height is consistent with the existing houses, but the door is considerably higher than its neighbors.

80' / 30' zone along interior portions of King and Meeting Streets and in the north Lockwood/Hospital Complex periphery area establishes a maximum height of 80 feet (seven to eight stories) and a minimum of 30 feet along the street frontage.

100' / 30' zone in the core of the hospital district and at the King / Meeting juncture with Spring / Cannon establishes a maximum height of 100 feet.

The **WP zone** intended for the waterfront industrial area will remain to support areas of active port and industrial uses.

Certain sites offer the opportunity to articulate important places in the urban fabric, to give special prominence to important buildings, and to provide a varied skyline. Such landmarks are appropriate at important street corners, at the termination of key streets and vistas, or in places where streets change direction. These landmarks are consistent with the tradition in historic Charleston, as seen in the church spires, Market Hall, and the Charleston Place clock tower.

In these locations, the Plan proposes to allow discrete architectural elements exceeding the zoning height limit. Small projections must be subject to a detailed urban design study demonstrating the appropriateness of the site, and the preservation of vistas and skyline integrity. A careful review and approval process is required for each proposal.

There may also be opportunity for modest height increases throughout the peninsula, and particularly in focal points, subject to detailed study.

Replace the overly permissive height zones.

The 3X zone that used to apply to King and Meeting Streets above Calhoun Street related the height to the lot size and setback. Under this regime, there was a risk that consolidation of land into large sites could result in very high (400') buildings. The 3X zone is replaced with an 80' / 30' and 100' / 30' zone that places a strict cap on height. Likewise, the lenient 100'/30' and 120'/30' zones located along King and Meeting Streets south of Calhoun Street are replaced by 80'/30' and 100'/30' zones.

8.5 Flood plain regulations: Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA)

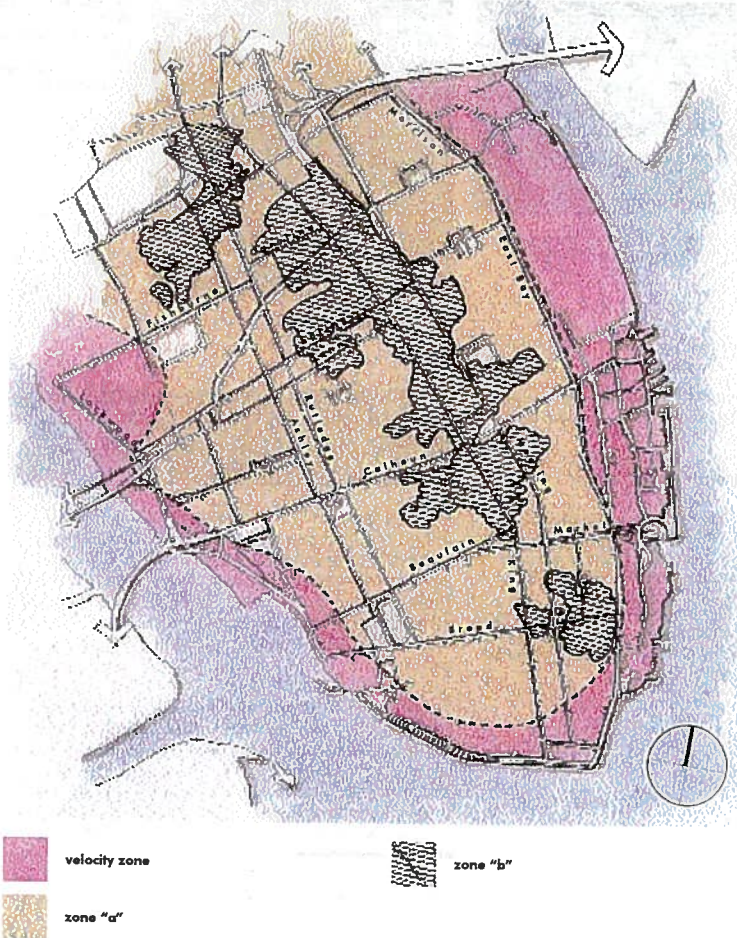
Through the Federal Insurance Administration, FEMA makes flood insurance available provided that flood plain management regulations that meet the national requirements are adopted and enforced. After 1989's Hurricane Hugo, the Federal government revised the flood plain management regulations to respond to the significant flooding. Today, much of downtown Charleston falls within a flood plain.

By and large, FEMA flood plain regulations prohibit active uses from being situated within the 100 year flood plain, meaning that living space and retail uses must be elevated above grade or street level. The revised requirements therefore have a significant impact on the scale and feel of the downtown that otherwise has a long history of buildings and uses that address the street and create an intimate walkable environment.

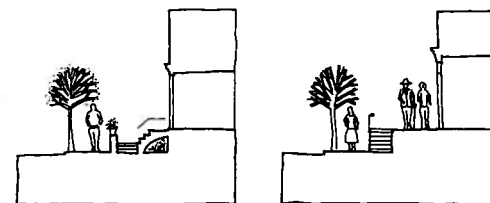
The two most prevalent zones in the downtown area are the "V"(velocity) zone and the "A" zone, with the former being the most restrictive. In the velocity zones, no enclosed

FEMA flood zones

Most of the reinvestment areas fall within the FEMA velocity flood zones and will be subject to more design regulations.



Maintaining vitality at street level is one of the biggest challenges faced when building in the FEMA flood zones. There are several design strategies which can be employed to help support an active street life, such as:

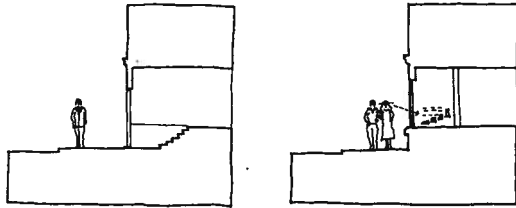


On streets where buildings are setback or sidewalk room is ample, change in level should accommodate porches and landings which overlook the street. This is particularly appropriate on residential buildings.

space is allowed below flood level or "break away" construction is required in addition to the raised elevation. In the less stringent zones, flood-proofing measures can be used at elevations below those required by FEMA, allowing for limited use of the street level.

There is impact where individual buildings are inserted into the historic city fabric, however, their individual effect is very localized. As well, the policy does not apply to the renovation or restoration of existing historic buildings. Where large parcels of land will be redeveloped, and all inhabitable space is elevated, the impact on the street level activity will be significant. Concentrations of such buildings risk creating a distinct lack of vitality at grade and a less appealing pedestrian environment.

Much of the available land lies within the most stringent elevation and velocity zones, calling for a creative response to maintaining vitality at grade. In particular, this approach applies to the lands along the Cooper River and Ashley River waterfronts.



On retail streets or streets where the sidewalk width is narrow entrances and lobbies should be at street level with any change in level inside the building. Other building frontage which is not lobby space could be recessed space for temporary vendors.



Along the Cooper River waterfront, where extensive building will occur in velocity zones, strategies should be found to retain vitality at grade, while working within flood plain regulations. One option is to raise the entry street level, as is proposed in phase one of the Union Pier plan.

Goal: Explore design methods to work within flood plain regulations and retain vitality at grade

Develop design techniques to keep grade level active in the velocity zones.

Numerous lobby entrances give the impression of a more active environment. Doorways that address the street also add to the sense of activity and can be accomplished provided that transitions in grade occur inside the buildings through the use of an interior foyer and stairs or ramps.

The use of texture, color and detail at pedestrian level can attract the eye and create a more animated feel. Windows also create a sense of animation. Where windows are not appropriate, opportunities for articulating the facade with openings or passages should be explored to provide a sense of interaction between interior and exterior portions of the buildings at street level. Details such as grill or latticework can add visual interest to the streetscape.

Strategic and liberal use of streetscape and landscape improvements also add to the sense of vitality. Streetscaping and furnishing add texture, play of light and shadow, and give pedestrians an opportunity to touch, smell, and feel the environment. Landscape walls covered with vegetation or integration of trees or gates add a human element. Street,

landscape, and facade lighting should be encouraged where appropriate.

Explore flood proofing techniques in less stringent "A" zones to retain an active street environment.

Where possible, floodgates should be utilized to allow for protected openings and some active uses at street level. Building materials that are approved for construction in flood prone areas should also be employed.

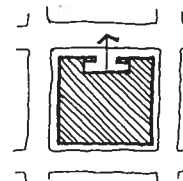
In addition, a certain percentage of ground floor space in newly developed buildings should be required to accommodate appropriate active uses. This initiative would challenge developers and architects to find opportunities for limited retail, lobbies, and foyers to animate the street level.

Amend height regime to respond to FEMA flood plain regulations.

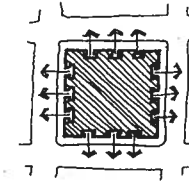
Where FEMA flood plain regulations apply, the height limits need to be studied and potentially revised. The intent is to ensure consistency with respect to the treatment of height within the downtown and to reduce the number of height variances required simply to deal with the flood regulations.

There are several methods of dealing with FEMA flood plain regulations. Height limits could apply over and above the maximum flood height established by the flood regulations.

However, where there is a flood elevation requirement of three feet or less, no allowances should be made to encourage animation of the street level. In other areas, a more complex method involves establishing height limits that reflect the changing topography and the existing skyline in the downtown and more detailed FEMA flood plain requirements. Further study is needed to determine the best approach.



Instead of one major entrance for a building, or complex of buildings...



...a strategy that encourages many entries should be used. This strategy will help insure buildings create an active street life on all sides.

8.6 Parking

Development in the downtown core is required to accommodate associated parking on-site. This policy was originally developed to ensure sufficient parking within the downtown. Although it has achieved this objective, the policy has several detrimental impacts on downtown's architectural integrity and quality of life. Fine-tuning is required.

For new construction in V zones, parking is typically accommodated on the ground floor. As a result, the street level lacks animation, diminishing the quality of the pedestrian environment. As well, it can create confusion with respect to the building entrances. Often, the main entrances will be from the parking garage rather than from the street, again diminishing the vitality and primacy of the street level. Similarly, surface parking lots, the frequent alternative, diminish the quality of the pedestrian environment.

On-site parking requirements are particularly difficult to meet on historic properties where there is generally insufficient space. As a result, the on-site parking requirements discourage the re-use of historic buildings and ultimately are a disincentive to restoration and preservation. Finally, because there is no maximum set on the number of parking spaces, downtown has a large supply of parking. As a

result, it is and will continue to be difficult to encourage increased use of public transit.

Goal: Reduce on-site parking

Reduce on site parking requirements in the zoning ordinance.

Article 3, Part 4 of the zoning ordinance identifies the off-street parking requirements. The zoning ordinance needs to be revised to reduce on-site parking requirements. These amendments need to be implemented hand-in-hand with recommendations outlined in Chapter 5 Achieving Balance: reduce the reliance on cars, requiring shared parking structures, cash-in-lieu payments, and transit improvements. For example, the reduction in parking spaces required might only be allowed upon the payment of a cash-in-lieu payment. The intent is to diminish the impact of parking on the city landscape and to encourage the use of shared or common parking structures.

8.7 Density

Greater intensity or density of construction characterizes urban areas, such as Charleston. Higher density can facilitate the mix of uses, living and employment opportunities in close proximity, and street vitality. In short, density is an important element in creating a vibrant, attractive city. Density should not be confused with height; increased density can occur within low-rise structures provided that buildings are designed to occupy greater amounts of the lot area.

In downtown Charleston, greater density in certain areas could achieve a number of community objectives - more housing, greater use of transit, more employment opportunities, and consolidation of downtown's position within the region. In particular, increased residential density can increase the downtown population and diversify the housing stock, creating housing for families of all sizes, ages, and income levels. Greater density would also maintain the historic pattern of development in the downtown.

Since being adopted in 1931, the first major amendment to Charleston's zoning ordinance was in 1966. Although there have been numerous smaller amendments since then,

the ordinance remains oriented toward regulating the development of the suburban environs rather than the urban, historic core. One example is restrictions respecting density, manifested through low lot coverage, lot area per unit requirements, and setback requirements that do not reflect the current pattern of development in the historic district. The zoning ordinance should be modified to encourage low- to mid-rise development that is appropriate within the historic downtown.

Goal: Encourage urbanization and maintenance of the historic urban built form

Modify commercial zones to permit increased residential density.

Generally, residential density in commercial zones is discussed in terms of the number of units per acre that are permitted. Many areas permit 19 units per acre although most commercial zones permit 26 units per acre. By creating more stringent standards for residential development in commercial zones than other commercial uses, new residential development or the rehabilitation of vacant buildings for residential purposes is discouraged. This standard should be revised to permit greater intensity comparable to commercial

standards. Residential lot occupancy standards should be eliminated in these districts.

Create a more intense residential zone.

The zoning ordinance should be modified to recognize sites on the edges of existing neighborhoods that could be zoned for higher intensity residential uses. Potential locations include arterial or collector roads on the periphery of lower intensity residential areas. Higher density residential uses will encourage affordable housing and ground floor neighborhood retail.



The Fort Sumter House condominium is a good example of housing which could be built in the high intensity areas.

8.8 Heritage Preservation

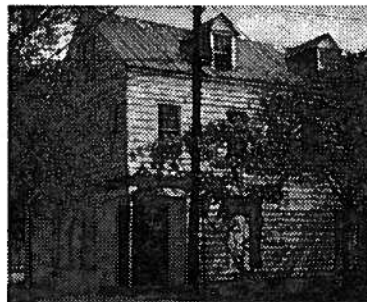
Through the coordinated efforts of private, non-profit and government sectors, Charleston has preserved and restored an extraordinary architectural legacy. Through the excellent work of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and developers, Charleston has ensured that new development fits well within the historic city context. This tradition needs to be supported and extended.

The Downtown Plan is a holistic and broad strategy to support the historic city. Through a comprehensive approach that aims to retain and extend the architectural integrity, urban design and quality of life, the Downtown Plan seeks to pursue heritage preservation and allow for the city's evolution. Recommendations respecting parking, transit, housing, open spaces and schools, and resolving the conflict between flood plain and zoning requirements, all seek to retain Charleston's unique qualities and lifestyle and achieve balance as growth occurs.

Beyond this broad strategy, the Downtown Plan seeks to ensure that the exemplary work of the city respecting heritage preservation will be extended further north as development pressures expand the area of reinvestment and growth. Once the Cooper River Bridge is relocated the



There are many historic buildings north of Calhoun that are in need of restoration.



Upper East Side of the Lower Peninsula (just north of the Crosstown) will be under significant development pressure. The emerging commercial corridors, Morrison Drive and Upper Meeting Street, require study and design guidelines to ensure compatible and appealing development.

Goal: Encourage heritage preservation

Provide additional protection of historic buildings north of the Old and Historic district but south of Crosstown.

Between Line Street and the Septima Clark Expressway and the Cooper River Bridges in both the East Side and Cannonborough / Elliottborough neighborhoods lie buildings that are just as historic as those buildings lying to the south of Line Street. The same attention should be paid to preserving the historic character of the rest of the neighborhood. Design review of new structures and review of changes to structures more than 100 years old and buildings in category 1, 2 and 3 need to be added to this area.

Update the Old and Historic Survey to Mt. Pleasant St.

The Old and Historic Survey, which identifies and rates significant historic structures, was last updated in the mid 1980s. The survey needs to be updated to ensure that buildings now

eligible are included and to ensure that it accurately reflects the existing inventory. The results need to be incorporated into the City's geographic information system to encourage its use in the decision making processes.

Amend the regulations for historic structures north of the district based on the survey.

Based on the results of the updated old and historic survey, the regulations protecting historic properties should be studied to determine if modifications are needed to expand protection to historic structures north of the Old City District. This area is likely to be the subject of significant development pressure in the near future due to growth and change in downtown.

To ensure the protection of historic buildings north of the current boundaries review of changes to structures more than 100 years old and Category 1, 2 and 3 buildings needs to be added to this area. Design review of new commercial structures along major corridors, which was recently implemented, will also help ensure compatible development.

Encourage the donation of private easements to protect facades, interiors and archeological resources of significant buildings or collections of buildings.

City regulations for buildings covers a limited range. For more complete protection, easements are encouraged to be donated to private preservation entities.

Develop an ordinance requiring archeological assessment at the site of all new public facilities or facilities that receive public funding.

Historic resources in Charleston include archaeological materials. Where helpful information is likely to be found, archeology should be required as a part of new public (government owned) facilities and those that receive public funding.

Facilitate protection of National Historic Landmarks Interiors.

There is increasing concern for the loss of historic resources with the renovation of interiors. National Historic Landmarks' interiors renovations should be reviewed by the Board of Architectural Review. Modifications to the Old and Historic City Ordinance should be studied to include the review of interior construction plans for National Historic Landmarks.

Create an historic building maintenance manual.

Appropriate maintenance of historic structures plays at least as significant a role in the caretaking of historic resources as restoration work. Appropriate techniques should be encouraged through the publication of a maintenance manual to be developed by the city and local preservation organizations.